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Widening Participation in Higher Education in the Netherlands

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Established since 1997, CFE is an independent not-for-profit company specialising in the provision of research and evaluation services across a broad field of education, employment and skills.

Contents

1| Introduction

1.1 Participation is an issue of ongoing concern in Dutch higher education (HE). The Netherlands faced a rapid democratisation and massification of higher education during the 1960s, 70s and 80s, reflecting the increasing democratisation of society. A general feature in Dutch HE is the policy of open access: all students who qualify for HE have to be offered a study place. Limits through selection only operate for a few study programmes that are very expensive to offer or that otherwise would lead to labour market difficulties, such as in medicine, veterinary science, dentistry and architecture.

1.2 In order to achieve strong progression to higher education, some reforms in secondary education are designed to better equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary for independent study. Based on the philosophy that all upper-secondary education students could make the step into HE, such reforms have to address the whole secondary education system. Thus, because the Dutch secondary education system is organised into three main tracks, one solution was to postpone the previously relatively early decision regarding which of the three main secondary education tracks to pursue.

1.3 Besides the open entrance approach, the Dutch government has initiated a number of policies that may support the increase in participation ratios in general and for non-traditional student groups in particular. A major initiative in this area is the early adoption of a so-called “direct student support system” in 1986. The longstanding tradition of supporting the parents of students was replaced with basic grants and loans for all students and means-tested grants for those from lower-income families. Another strand of initiatives addresses the provision of information to potential students in general as well as to particular student groups. The latter initiatives are more directed towards participation in science and engineering than to attract minority groups into HE.

1.4 In 2010, the Committee on the Future Sustainability of Dutch Higher Education (the Veerman Committee, 2010) explored the potential consequences for Dutch HE of the expected continuous growth in student numbers by some 30 per cent between 2008 and 2020. Because the Netherlands aims to be a top-five knowledge economy, measured by the Global Competitiveness Index (World Economic Forum, 2012), a high level of tertiary education participation is welcomed. However, in order to become truly economically competitive, quality is important, not just numbers. This highlights the point that a lot of policy attention is focused on strengthening the quality of education, reducing dropout rates and increasing study progress, rather than attracting particular student groups that are structurally underrepresented in Dutch higher education. Regarding the study success of students, the main responsibility lays with the individual higher education institutions (HEIs).

Structure of the report

1.5 This report addresses the following themes. Chapter 2 sets out the education structure with regard to primary and secondary education in the Netherlands. Chapter 3 addresses the higher education system. Here the binary divide between research universities and more professionally oriented Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) is discussed with a further focus on general access routes and funding policies. In Chapter 4 the major statistics available on access, participation, retention, dropout, study progress and successful completion are presented. Chapter 5 addresses the general policy developments towards widening access. Chapter 6 discusses policy initiatives and approaches that address target groups for widening access and participation. Chapter 7 focuses on policies for retention and study success. Chapter 8 discusses student financing, including tuition fee policies and student financial support, as one of the cornerstones of access policies in Dutch HE. Chapter 9 concludes the report with a critical review.

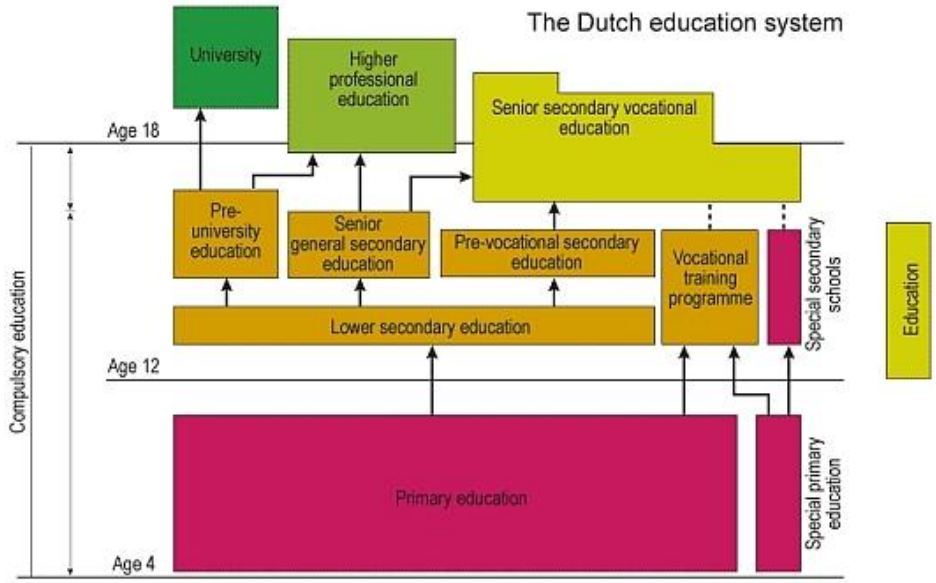
2| Education in the Netherlands

Education in the Netherlands

2.1 The schooling system in the Netherlands emphasizes choice in education. Education in the Netherlands is oriented towards the needs and background of the pupil. Education is divided into systems for different age groups, some of which are divided in streams for different educational levels (Eurydice, 2009). Schools are furthermore divided into public and denominational schools with some private schools. Educational policy is coordinated by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science with municipal governments.

2.2 Compulsory education (*leerplicht*) in the Netherlands starts at the age of five, although in practice, most children start as soon as they turn four. From the age of 16 there is partial compulsory education (*partiële leerplicht*), meaning that a pupil must attend some form of education for at least two days a week. Compulsory education ends for pupils aged 18 and over or when they get a degree at the age of 16 and over.

Figure 2.1: The Dutch education system



Source: Du Bois-Reymond (2009).

2.3 A main distinction is made between 'public schools' and 'private schools' (Eurypedia, 2013) in the Netherlands education system; definitions of these differ from the UK. Public schools (*openbare scholen*) are controlled by the local governments while private schools are governed by a board or the foundation that set them up, mostly by a denominational group (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, Hindu) or based on specific philosophic educational principles. Both public and private schools are publicly funded, receiving equal financial support from the government if certain criteria are

met. Although they are officially free of charge, these schools may ask for a parental contribution for extracurricular activities (*ouderbijdrage*). Real private schools that rely on their own funds are highly uncommon in the Netherlands.

2.4 As a result, there can be Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim elementary and secondary schools, and universities. These denominational schools can reject applications of pupils whose parents or caretakers disagree with the school's educational philosophy, but this is uncommon. In practice, there is little difference between denominational schools and public schools, except for the relatively new Muslim schools. All schools are under the jurisdiction of a government body called *Inspectie van het Onderwijs* (Education Inspectorate) that can demand a school to change its educational policy and quality or run the risk of closure.

Primary education

2.5 Between the ages of four and twelve children attend elementary school (*basisschool*). This school has eight grades, called *groep 1* through *groep 8*. School attendance is not compulsory until group 2 (at age five), but almost all children commence school at age four (in group 1). Groups 1 and 2 used to be held in a separate institution akin to kindergarten (*kleuterschool*), until it was merged with elementary schools in 1985. In groups 3 and 4 many schools support pupils from non-native backgrounds with additional Dutch language courses.

2.6 Most schools teach English in groups 7 and 8, but some start as early as group 4. In group 8 the vast majority of schools administer an aptitude test called the *Cito Eindtoets Basisonderwijs.* This test is designed to recommend the type of secondary education best suited for a pupil. Of course the opinion of teachers is also a strong factor in the choice of the type of secondary education followed by a pupil.

Secondary education

2.7 After attending elementary education, Dutch children (by that time usually 12 years old) go directly to secondary education (*voortgezet onderwijs*). Based on the advice of the elementary school teachers and the *Cito*-test scores, pupils and their parents can choose between streams of secondary education: vocational, general secondary and academic (VMBO, HAVO or VWO; explained below). The first year is often used as an orientation year after which pupils can easily transfer into another stream. Most secondary education schools offer all education routes.

2.8 The first type of secondary education concerns vocational training programmes or VMBO (*voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*). VMBO education lasts four years, from the age of 12 to 16. It combines vocational training with theoretical education in languages, mathematics, history, arts and sciences. About 60 per cent of all Dutch youngsters enrol in VMBO. Students can choose between four different levels of VMBO that differ in the ratio of practical vocational training and theoretical education. After VMBO, pupils can choose to enter senior secondary vocational education (MBO). The MBO lasts from one to four years. On completion of the four-year route, pupils can enrol in a University of Applied Sciences (HBO) or enter the labour market.

2.9 HAVO education (*hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs*) or senior general secondary education, consists of five grades and is attended by pupils from age 12 to 16. A HAVO diploma provides access to a UAS.

2.10 Finally VWO education (voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs), also called pre-university education, consists of six grades and is typically attended from age 12 to 18. A VWO diploma provides access to university training, although universities may set their own admission criteria (e.g., based on profile or on certain subjects). VWO is divided into atheneum and gymnasium. A gymnasium programme is similar to the atheneum, except that Latin and/or Greek are compulsory courses. Some VWO programmes offer extra subjects such as philosophy, additional foreign languages and courses to introduce students to scholarly research. Some schools offer bilingual VWO where 50 per cent of the lessons are taught in English and 50 per cent in Dutch.

3| Higher education in the Netherlands

Dutch higher education: an overview

3.1 Until the mid-1980s Dutch HE consisted only of traditional research universities. In 1984, the system was transformed into a binary system by upgrading former upper secondary professional schools into a sector of non-university professional higher education institutions (*hogescholen*), now called universities of applied sciences (UAS). The UAS sector includes teacher training institutions, colleges of art, technical schools and more comprehensive professional institutions (Kaiser and Vossensteyn, 2005).

3.2 Because of the strong expansion in HE since the late 1960s, the new UAS institutions (since 1984) were seen as a cheap way to cater for the massification of HE, because the UAS institutions did not have a research function. In addition, the UAS institutions were envisaged to offer more part-time and professional programmes that would fit the labour market's needs and the Dutch economy in general. In order to make the *hogescholen* efficient and effective, the many previous vocational schools had to substantially increase in size through mergers as well as gaining greater autonomy regarding the use of resources, staffing policies and structure of educational programmes. Through the merger process, over 350 UAS institutions had merged into 85 institutions by 1987, of which some 45 were large to very large multi-purpose institutions. Some of the latter turned out to be larger than most of the existing universities. A further merger operation in the 1990s reduced the number to only 39 UAS institutions. The 39 publicly funded UASs (*hogescholen*) include general institutions as well as institutions specialising in a specific field such as agriculture, fine and performing arts or teacher training. These UAS institutions offer a wide range of programmes which prepare students for professional practice and enable them to function in society at large.

3.3 The Dutch HE system is a binary system including the 39 UAS institutions and 13 traditional research universities. The research universities include nine general universities, three universities specialising in engineering and one in the area of agriculture. The research universities prepare students for independent scientific work in an academic or professional setting. Additionally, a number of small "designated institutions" are part of the university sector: a private university for business administration (Nijenrode), four institutes for theology, a university for humanistics, as well as several international education institutes. These are formally part of the HE system, but are usually not included in educational statistics and only to a limited extent are they influenced directly by overall HE policy.

3.4 In addition to the universities and UAS institutions, students can follow publicly funded tertiary education at the Open University, located in Heerlen. The Open University offers a wide range of courses, which may lead to both formal university and higher professional education degrees. Furthermore, the Netherlands has a large number of

private teaching institutes and organisations that offer recognised certificates, diplomas and degrees in various professional fields such as accountancy and business administration. Quite often these are structured as `external studies' in the sense of correspondence and/or distance learning courses with limited face-to-face interaction.

Access to higher education

Pathways

3.5 Access to HE is organised through a number of educational career opportunities in the Netherlands. Secondary education is already divided into a number of levels and orientations, not all leading to a HE entrance qualification.

3.6 In comparison to many other countries, the binary HE system together with a secularised secondary education system results in a system of separate pathways to HE. The minimum access requirement to enter a bachelor's programme at a UAS is either a HAVO diploma (5-year general upper secondary education diploma) or an MBO (diploma of secondary vocational education) with some connections between the types of courses followed at the MBO and the envisaged UAS programme. Both types of school leavers can also enter the relatively new Associate degree programmes at UAS institutions.

3.7 For access to the more academically oriented university bachelor's programmes students are required to have a VWO diploma (6-year pre-university diploma) or to have completed the first year (60 credits) of a bachelor's programme at a UAS. This implies that HAVO graduates can first enter a UAS bachelor's programme and after successful completion of the first year transfer to a university bachelor's programme in a connected area of study. The VWO diploma also grants access to universities of applied sciences.

3.8 As an exception to the rule, prospective HE students may be admitted to HE after passing a special entrance examination (*colloquium doctum*) which tests if their knowledge is at the appropriate level. This entrance examination may only be taken by those aged 21 or over. This lower age limit may be waived in the case of courses in the fine and performing arts. This entrance route, based on recognition of previous acquired knowledge, is of growing importance.

3.9 The only access requirement for the Open University is that applicants have to be at least 18 years of age.

3.10 For access to all master's programmes, a bachelor's degree in one or more specific and connected disciplines is required, in some cases in combination with other requirements. Graduates with a bachelor's degree in the applied arts and sciences usually have to fulfil additional requirements for access to a research-oriented master's programme.

Selection/admission

3.11 Dutch HE is based on the principle of 'open access.' This means that all students with a sufficient entrance qualification can attend the study programme and institution they prefer. There are a number of exceptions to this rule:

- Students are required to have completed at least one of the subject clusters of courses in secondary education that fulfil the requirements for the HE programme in question. Secondary school pupils choose one of four clusters of subject combinations for their school-leaving examination. Entry to most HE courses is on the basis of specific subject combinations but candidates who do not meet this requirement may still be admitted based on their strength in certain optional subjects studied at school.
- There are a few programmes for which the number of study places is limited and selection is organised. These are the so-called numerus fixus courses where the maximum number of first-year students that may be admitted to a particular course and/or institution is restricted (such as university courses in medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry and life sciences, or HBO courses in journalism and physiotherapy). There are two types of numerus fixus:
    - A national quota, when the joint capacity of all the institutions providing a particular course is insufficient for the number of students wishing to enrol in that course. The national quotas only apply to some university education programmes like medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry and life sciences.
    - An institutional quota, when there is sufficient capacity within the sector as a whole but insufficient places at one or more individual institutions. For example, if the number of applicants exceeds 125 per cent of last year's intake in that programme at that institution, then the programme can call for an *institutional numerus clausus*. The institutional quotas apply to both universities and HBO institutions.

3.12 HBO institutions and universities have a central admissions system. All applications to first-year programmes are filed online through Studielink (www.studielink.nl), a common instrument for HE, which links up all institutional administrations with DUO (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs, www.duo.nl). This means that students have a one-stop shop on the internet for all application and registration procedures, including change of address. Studielink also helps to ensure that the requirements for better-quality information do not cause more administrative problems for students and institutions.

3.13 For courses subject to a quota (*numerus fixus*), there is also a weighted draw for places followed by selection by the institutions themselves. Prospective students must apply to the Central Applications and Placement Office (CBAP). Where no restrictions on numbers apply, students are free to enrol on whichever course and at whichever university they wish. The selection procedure for places at universities and UAS institutions is as follows:

- Prospective students with an average grade of 8 or higher in their school-leaving examination are automatically awarded a place on the course of their choice.

- Those not entitled to direct admission are allocated places by means of a weighted draw. The higher a prospective student's average school-leaving examination grade, the higher their chances of gaining admission via the draw. Applicants may take part in no more than three draws.
- Decentralised selection: study places may be awarded by the educational institutions themselves. They may apply their own selection criteria, provided these are not linked to school-leaving examination results. Decentralised selection is optional, and if institutions decide not to opt for it, the draw system automatically applies instead. Currently, the number of places to be allocated under decentralised selection may not exceed 50 per cent of the total available places, minus the number of students with a grade 8 or higher, who have been directly awarded places. For decentralised selection HEIs increasingly use soft selection mechanisms as well, including intake interviews, online study and career orientation tests, online assessments, etc.

3.14 Potential students older than 21 years who do not possess one of the qualifications mentioned above can qualify for access to HE on the basis of an entrance examination and assessment (recognition of prior learning). For access to certain programmes, particularly those in the fine arts, students have to demonstrate the required artistic abilities.

3.15 Both universities and UAS institutions are free to select students for their master's programmes. However, each university bachelor has to be allowed to enter at least one successive master's programme at his or her university.

3.16 In general, in order to help students make better choices, HEIs increasingly offer prospective students online study and career orientation tests as well as tailor-made assessments. The government provides wide study choice information through a specific website: Studiekeuze 123 (http://www.studiekeuze123.nl). Here an annual overview is presented of institutions and study programmes available in the Netherlands and their respective quality. It also offers 'interest tests' and further information on various access issues. These services are paid for by the government. Further information can be found at the site http://www.kiesjestudie.nl/keuzegids.html. This site offers comparative information about institutions, programmes and cities. For detailed information one has to buy specific study guides.

Funding of higher education

3.17 Universities and UAS institutions receive public funding for the provision of accredited and recognised study programmes and for research. Since 1 January 2011 a new universal funding model for teaching in both universities and UAS institutions has been implemented, which replaces previously different systems for each of the HE sectors. The statutory basis for funding HE is the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW).[1] Funding takes the form of block grants and is further regulated in the Higher Education and Research Funding Decree and the Higher Education Funding Order.

[1] https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Netherlands:Legislation

3.18 The total national budget for HEIs, the central government grant, is fixed by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science (agricultural institutions – one university and a few UAS institutions – receive their grants from the Ministry of Agriculture). There are separate budgets for the UAS sector and for the universities. The latter budget is subdivided into a section for teaching and a part for research. The budget is corrected in line with wage and price rises only, except where adjustments have to be made in the light of policy decisions (e.g., on the basis of substantial rises in student numbers).

3.19 Next to funding universities and UAS, the government also provides public funds for the eight academic hospitals. These are generally separate budgets given to the universities by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to provide medical education, research and practical training for students.

Funding models, mechanisms and incentives

3.20 The public budget provided to HEIs is predominantly distributed according to an allocation formula. The public funds for teaching and research (first flow of funds) are mainly provided as a block grant to universities and UAS institutions. For universities, about two-thirds of this block grant is meant for research, one-third only for teaching. Almost 100 per cent of the direct public funds for UAS institution is for teaching.

Previous funding model for teaching

3.21 Until 2011 UAS institutions were funded in a different way to universities for their teaching tasks. In the UAS sector, public funds for teaching were mainly distributed on the basis of student numbers and the duration of studies. This meant that a UAS would receive a normative amount of funding per graduate and per dropout, based on a normative duration (4.5 years and 1.35 years respectively). For a graduate a UAS received 4.5 times the standard tariff, for a dropout only 1.35 times. That means that the faster students graduated or decided to give up their studies (i.e., within the first year), the larger the amount of funding the institution received.

3.22 Within the universities the total budget for teaching was allocated on the basis of three parameters: 50 per cent on the basis of the number of realised graduates (with different amounts for bachelor's and master's diplomas), 13 per cent on the basis of the number of new entrants and 37 per cent as a fixed provision based on historical allocations. For the new entrants and graduates, three different funding tariffs applied between alpha/gamma programmes, beta/engineering programmes and medical programmes. A university received 1.5 times as much for an engineering graduate compared to a social sciences graduate, while medicine graduates were rewarded with three times the amount of a social sciences graduate (1:1.5:3).

Current funding model for teaching

3.23 Since the 1st of January 2011, all HEIs have been treated equally with regards to the public funding of teaching tasks. The allocation model has been simplified and only allocates funds for students that are within the nominal duration of a programme and for the successful completion of bachelor's and master's degrees.

Relation with widening participation and study success

3.24 Universities and UAS institutions do not have to use part of their budget for widening participation. Issues of access have to be addressed by national policies as will be explained later on. But of course, if one considers the policy of open access combined with a funding mechanism that rewards larger numbers of students and graduates, one can imagine that particularly underrepresented target groups form an interesting market for HEIs. Even more so, if one takes into account that the transition rate into HE in general is very high, the underrepresented groups like non-native students form the most interesting target group if one wants to expand access. Universities themselves can be active in this area, but no structural policies are known.

3.25 With regard to study success, funding models since 1993 have rewarded study success in the sense that the funding formula for teaching has been partly based on the number of degrees conferred. This implies that institutions benefit if their students are successful in terms of graduating (within a limited period of time). In addition, it rewards early dropout, which encourages institutions to actively support students to make sufficient progress or to quit and start a programme that better fits their expectations and capacities.

Tuition fees

3.26 In addition to the public funds, students have been expected to pay tuition fees since 1945. The public funding system takes into account that students pay tuition fees and as such share the costs of their education with the government. Students pay their fees directly to the institutions, which can use these revenues at their own discretion. Tuition fees define between 15 per cent and 20 per cent of the teaching revenues of both universities and UAS institutions. In academic year 2012/13, regular full-time students paid a tuition fee of €1771 per academic year. On average, the teaching costs per students are around €8000 per year (CPB, 2013). Part-time students are required to pay higher tuition fees, ranging between €1771 and €5000 per year, depending on the programme and institution. Students who are not eligible for student financial support as well as non-EU foreign students may have to pay up to the full costs of education, with tuition fees up to €12,000 per year or even €15,000 for professional master's programmes at UAS institutions.

Experiments with open competition

3.27 Since 2006, the ministry has run an experiment with open competition for funding in HE. On a limited scale, recognised private HE institutions like LOI (*Leidse Onderwijsinstellingen*) and NTI (*Nederlands Trainings Instituut*) can also receive public funds for accredited study programmes. The experiment will run until 2013 and in 2015 a final evaluation will take place in order to assess the long-term (labour market) effects. The experiment is meant to see whether a more open HE system would have benefits in terms of access, quality and effectiveness in HE. A mid-term review in 2010 showed that the participating private recognised institutions applied in particular for already accredited programmes that have considerable numbers of students (Commissie Experimenten Open Bestel Hoger Onderwijs, 2010). An interesting development is that the participating institutions get into stronger competition on price, particularly also with part-time public providers. They also start more targeted

information campaigns and soft selection mechanisms (intake interviews) and more frequent teacher contacts in order to reduce dropouts. Gradually they are attracting more students and thus helping the system as a whole to further expand. Private providers that base their teaching on face-to-face instruction show 35 per cent higher persistence rates than distance education providers.

4| Widening participation data

4.1 Though the Netherlands has relatively well-structured statistical databases with regard to HE statistics, data concerning the topic of 'widening participation' are relatively scarce because a number of key characteristics concerning target groups are not collected or structurally linked to access and study success data like progression, retention and degree rates. Dutch statistics do show some differences between students from various ethnic backgrounds, but not by parental education or by parental income. Ethnic background is generally defined as:

- Native (Dutch students);
- Non-native Western (first or second generation non-natives coming from European countries [excl. Turkey], North America, Oceania, Indonesia and Japan);
- Non-native non-Western (first- or second-generation non-natives coming from other countries, who mostly have Dutch nationality).

4.2 The data on student enrolment in HEIs are collected every year on 1st October and published in February the following year. These data include international students that pursue a full study programme (degree mobility). The number of students has been continuously growing since the mid-1990s in the Netherlands and this growth is estimated to continue up to 2020 (Veerman *et al*., 2010). Data concerning access, enrolment, study success and transition into the labour market are collected and published by Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2013: http://www.cbs.nl/), the Universities' Association (VSNU, 2013: www.vsnu.nl) and the Association of the Universities of Applied Sciences (Vereniging Hogescholen, 2013: http://www.verenigingh ogescholen.nl/).

Access to higher education

4.3 In the academic year 2011/2012, in total 135,000 students enrolled in HE for the first time, of which 52,826 were at universities and 98,884 in UAS institutions. Table 4.1 provides an overview for the period 1995 till 2012. Data are shown by discipline.

4.4 The table indicates that Business Administration and Social Sciences are the disciplines with the largest student intake for the university sector. At the UAS institutions, most first-years start in the Business Administration programmes, followed by Health Care (nursery) and Education (teacher training) programmes.

4.5 In both sectors, less than 10 per cent of students are enrolled in engineering programmes, which is regarded as problematic given the high ambitions of the Dutch to remain a top-five knowledge-intensive and innovative economy.

Table 4.1: First-year students, by sector and discipline

Year	1995/96	2000/01	2005/06	2010/11	2011/12*
Universities					
Total	29,946	32,871	42,292	52,452	52,826
Education/teacher training	1,227	1,575	1,991	2,112	1,987
Languages, history & arts	4,166	4,249	5,669	6,822	6,440
Social Sciences	7,344	8,969	8,822	10,799	10,762
Journalism/documentation	14	-	28	64	37
Business administration	2,806	3,987	7,973	11,637	11,792
Law	4,634	4,135	4,734	5,008	5,218
Natural sciences and ICT	2,698	3,133	3,126	4,125	4,300
Engineering	3,357	3,109	3,650	4,723	4,978
Agriculture and veterinary sc.	400	324	452	627	621
Healthcare/medicine	2,984	3,202	5,325	5,793	6,033
Services and logistics	316	188	440	586	522
UAS Institutions					
Total	67,304	85,315	88,850	100,103	98,884
Education/teacher training	12,947	16,820	17,130	15,343	14,071
Languages, history & arts	3,806	4025	5,147	5,998	6,145
Social Sciences	1,508	3022	3,295	5,237	5,394
Journalism/documentation	1,253	1253	1,032	953	918
Business administration	16,773	23,389	20,108	23,637	24,419
Law	-	-	1,888	3,190	3,046
Natural sciences and ICT	2,272	5,383	5,216	5,587	5,981
Engineering	8,734	8,533	7,555	8,382	7,956
Agriculture and veterinary sc.	1,123	985	1,118	1,155	1,025
Healthcare/medicine	14,423	16,150	17,536	20,827	20,568
Services and logistics	4,465	5,755	8,825	9,794	9,361

Source: CBS, 2013.

4.6 Official national statistics particularly focus on ethnic backgrounds of students and not on parental education, occupation or income. From Table 4.2 it can be seen that the majority of Dutch HE students are native Dutch students. However, the proportion of native Dutch students declined from 80 per cent in 1995/96 to about 67 per cent in 2012/13. In universities this decline was much stronger (to 62 per cent) compared to the change in the UAS sector (to 72 per cent). In both sectors the proportion of non-native non-Western first-years increased from about 6 per cent to about 15 per cent of total intake. The number of non-native Western students doubled in the university sector from 9 per cent to 18 per cent while this proportion remained stable in UAS institutions at around 8 per cent. Over decades, the proportion of non-native non-Western people at all education levels has increased and so in terms of widening participation, one can conclude that HE has become more inclusive over the same

period. This development can be related to the successful integration of non-natives in Dutch society.

Table 4.2: First-year students, by ethnic background

Year	1995/96	2000/01	2005/06	2010/11	2011/12*	2012/13*
Higher Education						
Total	85,428	104,681	114,429	134,099	135,001	133,614
Native	68,115	76,854	83,239	91,947	91,234	89,773
Non-native (Western)	6,638	8,505	11,445	16,834	16,783	16,679
Non-native (non-Western)	5,524	10,178	15,075	19,979	19,854	19,198
Unknown	5,151	9,144	4,670	5,339	7,130	7,964
Universities						
Total	29,946	32,871	42,292	52,452	52,826	51,997
Native	24,175	25,532	30,253	34,000	33,120	32,012
Non-native (Western)	2,666	3,136	5,110	9,036	9,147	9,372
Non-native (non-Western)	1,924	2,976	5,384	7,569	7,505	6,789
Unknown	1,181	1,227	1,545	1,847	3,054	3,824
UAS Institutions						
Total	67,304	85,315	88,850	100,103	98,884	96,933
Native	53,956	62,308	66,284	72,218	70,757	69,475
Non-native (Western)	4,887	6,518	7,760	9,440	9,205	8,656
Non-native (non-Western)	4,337	8,353	11,621	14,915	14,769	14,578
Unknown	4,124	8,136	3,185	3,530	4,153	4,224

Source: CBS, 2013.

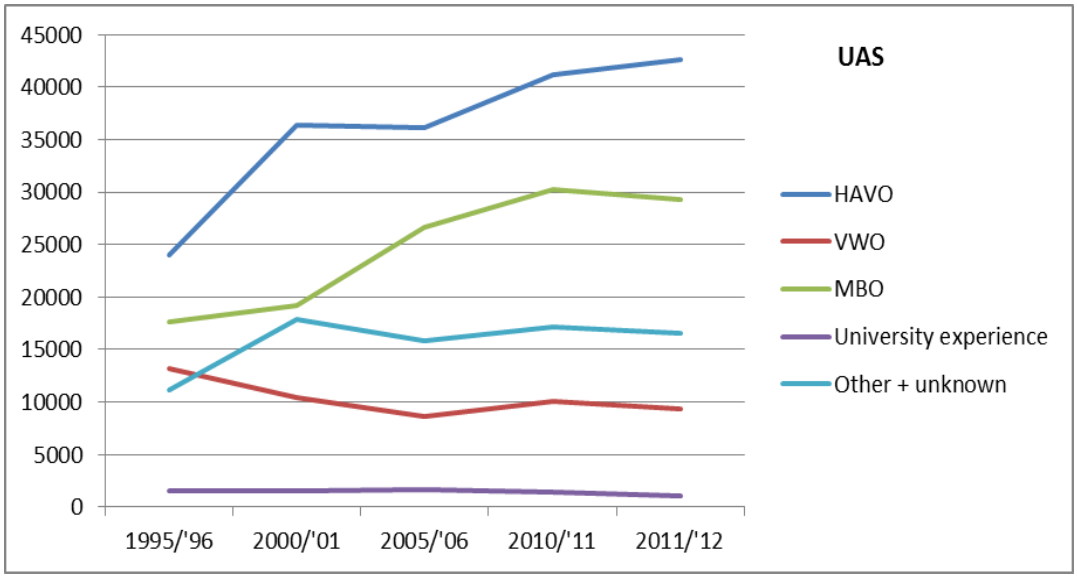
4.7 In a recent study, CBS looked at the relationship between pre-qualification, parental income, participation and study success (Kazemier, 2013; see also Figure 4.3 on page 25). This study showed that educational qualification has a stronger impact on participating in HE than parental income. About 93 per cent of pupils with pre-university education went on to HE. For those with upper secondary general education this is 85 per cent and of those with vocational qualifications about 45 per cent. Within these groups, students from richer families go on to HE more often than those from lower income backgrounds. The differences, however, are in the pre-university group: 96 per cent for the 10 per cent highest income group versus 90 per cent for the 10 per cent lowest income group. For the other qualification groups the pattern is similar. This implies that parental income does have an impact on the likelihood to participate in HE, but it is not very strong. This may have something to do with that fact that overall Dutch society is relatively affluent, with social security systems protecting the poorest groups. Nevertheless, children from lower income families normally show lower education attainment scores and thus qualify for HE less often.

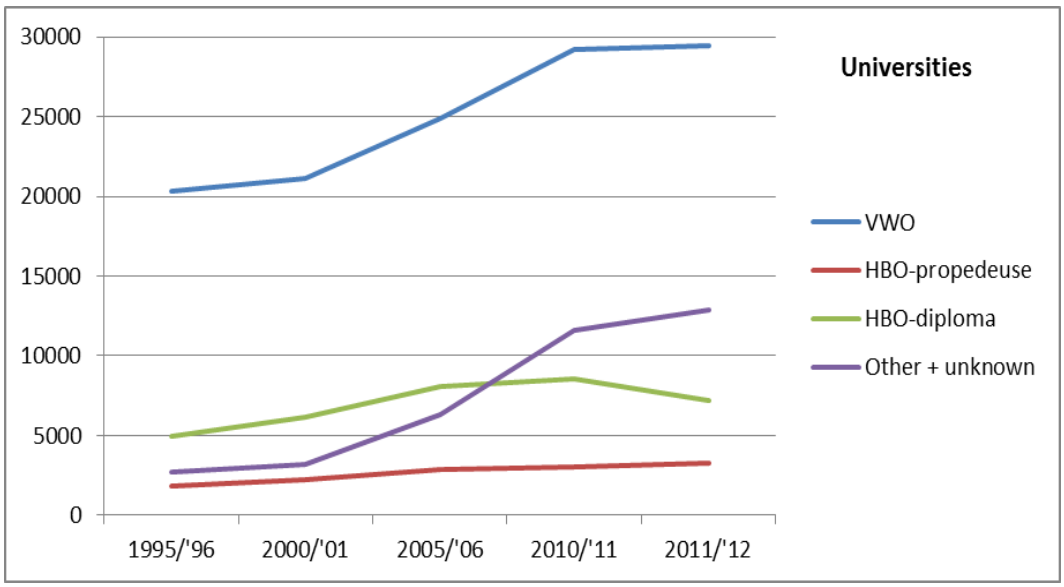
4.8 Further data from CBS (2013) show some other interesting developments. Looking at the pre-qualifications of new entrants, the proportion of new entrants at university with a direct entrance qualification (VWO) dropped from 64 per cent in 1995 to 56 per cent in 2011. At UAS institutions the opposite development happened: between 1995 and 2011 the proportion of students with a HAVO qualification increased from 36 per cent to 43 per cent. At the same time, the number of pre-university qualified students choosing a UAS programme declined from 20 per cent in 1995 to 9 per cent in 2011. The development in the number of new entrants by entrance qualifications is shown in Figure 4.1 overleaf for UAS institutions and universities, respectively. The national Committee on the Future Sustainability of Dutch Higher Education reported this as problematic as it indicated a decline in the educational level of students at UAS institutions (Veerman *et al*., 2010). For example, Kazemier (2013) shows that VWO-qualified students are the most successful, both at university and at UAS institutions.

4.9 At universities, the proportion of students with some UAS background is relatively stable at around 23 per cent. At UAS the proportion of new entrants with secondary vocational training increased from 22 per cent to 30 per cent. In the whole HE sector, the group of students with 'other entrance qualifications', like foreign degrees and 'earlier acquired competences', has increased from 6 per cent in 1995 to 11 per cent in 2011 (CBS, 2013). All in all, this indicates that the student population is getting a bit more diverse and wider target groups are being addressed.

4.10 The proportion of female new entrants increased from 50 per cent in 1995 to 52 per cent in 2011. In universities this development was stronger with a change in female first enrolments from 47 per cent to 53 per cent. In the UAS sector, with nursing and teacher training as large disciplinary sectors, this development was less strong: a change from 51 per cent to 53 per cent.

Figure 4.1: New entrants by entrance qualification (1995 – 2012)



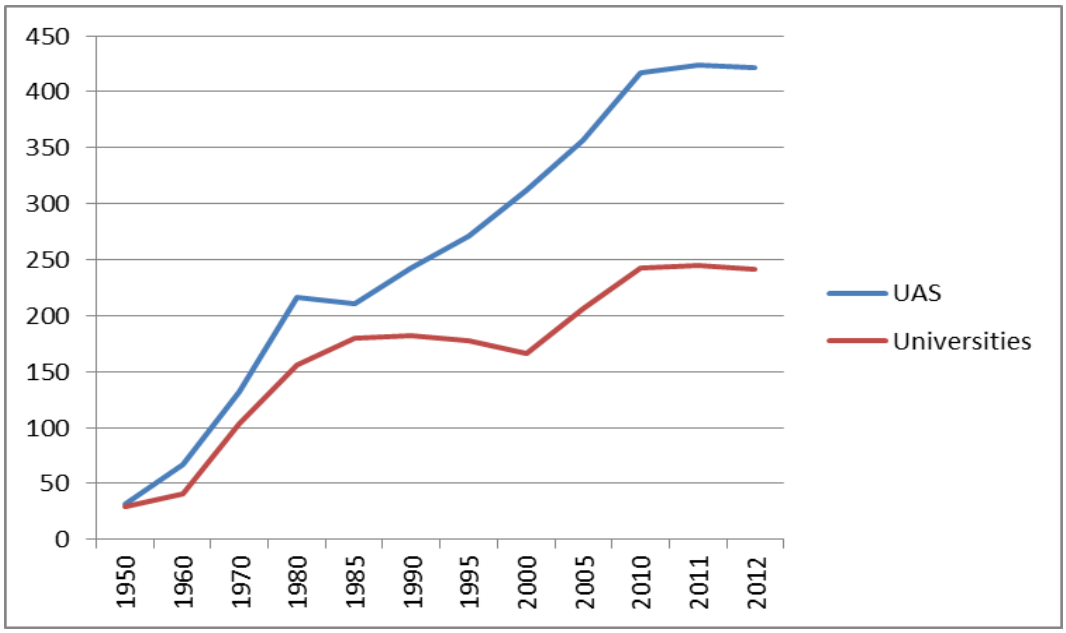


Source: CBS, 2013.

Higher education participation

4.11 Looking at total enrolments, patterns similar to those of new entrants are likely to appear, though with a small time delay. Figure 4.2 shows the general development in total enrolments in universities and UAS institutions. It is clear that the UAS sector has always been larger than the university sector and that this has become particularly apparent since the UAS sector was officially recognised as HE. The ambition to expand and thus also widen HE by offering a 'cheap' alternative next to the university sector has been achieved. The Veerman Committee (2010) confirmed this success as it stated that the UAS sector plays a crucial role in educating large numbers of highly qualified professionals that are strongly appreciated in the labour market.

Figure 4.2: Total enrolment in Dutch higher education since 1950 (x1000)



Source: CBS, 2013.

4.12 Summarising, in the academic year 2012/13 there were 241,321 students enrolled at the 13 research universities (VSNU, 2013: www.vsnu.nl) and 421,519 students at the 39 universities of applied sciences (Vereniging Hogescholen, 2013: www.hbo-raad.nl). Altogether there were 662,840 students enrolled at both types of HEI. Table 4.3 shows that, at universities, Business Administration, Social Sciences, Health/Medicine and Humanities are the largest disciplines. However, Business Administration has grown from about 11 per cent to 20 per cent of all students in the 1995–2012 period. Engineering decreased from 12 per cent to about 9 per cent.

4.13 In UAS institutions the largest disciplines are Business Administration, Healthcare and Education (teacher training). Business Administration enrols close to 25 per cent of all students.

Table 4.3: Total student enrolments, by sector and discipline

Year	1995/96	2000/01	2005/06	2010/11	2011/12*	2012/13*
Universities						
Total	177,746	166,299	205,886	242,345	245,322	241,321
Education/teacher training	5,820	5,958	8,182	9,310	9,441	9,427
Languages, history & arts	25,754	20,383	26,594	32,880	32,234	30,639
Social Sciences	44,399	41,559	44,390	45,218	46,497	44,866
Journalism/documentation	78	42	299	574	472	219
Business administration	18,180	19,763	34,893	47,825	47,922	46,737
Law	25,477	22,252	24,133	25,766	25,422	24,220
Natural sciences and ICT	14,547	13,941	16,180	18,508	19,276	19,908
Engineering	19,303	17,378	17,832	21,646	22,539	23,004
Agriculture and veterinary sc.	2,830	2,529	2,551	2,973	3,090	3,171
Healthcare/medicine	19,210	20,958	28,862	35,028	35,570	36,041
Services and logistics	2,148	1,536	1,794	2,091	2,299	2,703
UAS institutions						
Total	270,565	312,698	356,842	416,629	423,719	421,519
Education/teacher training	57,075	62,092	76,830	77,547	74,580	70,063
Languages, history & arts	15,476	16,537	21,336	24,250	24,677	24,660
Social Sciences	4,848	11,731	15,103	21,656	22,362	22,647
Journalism/documentation	5,527	5,408	4,328	4,085	4,069	3,758
Business administration	68,078	82,218	82,008	97,109	101,473	101,331
Law	-	-	4,797	11,084	11,434	11,554
Natural sciences and ICT	9,679	18,374	21,528	23,841	25,207	26,028
Engineering	37,998	32,609	29,666	32,424	32,553	32,452
Agriculture and veterinary sc.	4,116	3,939	4,200	4,178	4,064	4,085
Healthcare/medicine	51,013	59,059	65,224	80,005	82,455	84,164
Services and logistics	16,755	20,731	31,822	40,450	40,845	40,777

Source: CBS, 2013.

4.14 Table 4.4 shows the modes in which students study. In the Netherlands, most students (about 90 per cent) study full-time. In universities this percentage is 97 per cent, with only 3 per cent studying in part-time in 2012. This percentage has decreased from 6 per cent in 1995. In UAS institutions about 13 per cent of the students study part-time and about 3 per cent of the students are enrolled in 'dual-mode' learning tracks in which teaching and practical learning at the workplace are officially combined. The relatively low proportions of part-time students are said to reflect the low interest of students in lifelong learning opportunities in Dutch public HE (Veerman *et al*., 2010).

Table 4.4: Total enrolments, by sector and mode of activity

Year	1995/96	2000/01	2005/06	2010/11	2011/12*	2012/13*
Higher education						
Total	448,311	478,997	562,728	658,974	669,041	662,840
Full-time	395,028	398,588	473,125	570,575	586,716	590,713
Part-time	51,803	73,307	77,530	75,157	69,537	60,120
Dual	1,480	7,102	12,073	13,242	12,788	12,007
Universities						
Total	177,746	166,299	205,886	242,345	245,322	241,321
Full-time	167,590	152,816	192,110	231,053	235,939	233,966
Part-time	10,156	13,396	13,526	10,881	8,952	6,932
Dual	-	87	250	411	431	423
UAS institutions						
Total	270,565	312,698	356,842	416,629	423,719	421,519
Full-time	227,438	245,772	281,015	339,522	350,777	356,747
Part-time	41,647	59,911	64,004	64,276	60,585	53,188
Dual	1,480	7,015	11,823	12,831	12,357	11,584

Source: CBS, 2013.

4.15 As with the number of new entrants, total enrolments by ethnicity also show that non-native students are under-represented in Dutch HE. This is shown in Table 4.5, but the proportion of non-natives has gone up from 15 per cent in 1995 to 25 per cent in 2012. For universities it is up to 27 per cent and UAS institutions 24 per cent. Most interestingly, however, is that in the period 1995–2012, the total number of non-native non-Western students almost quadrupled, representing 6 per cent in 1995 and 14 per cent in 2012. This increase was slightly stronger in the UAS sector compared to the universities. In general, this tendency shows that HE opened up to ethnic minority groups in the past decades because the non-native non-Western groups include the large minority groups in Dutch society from Turkish, Moroccan, Surinam and Dutch Antilles backgrounds who gradually started to integrate better into Dutch society from the late 1980s onwards.

Table 4.5: Total enrolments, by sector and ethnicity

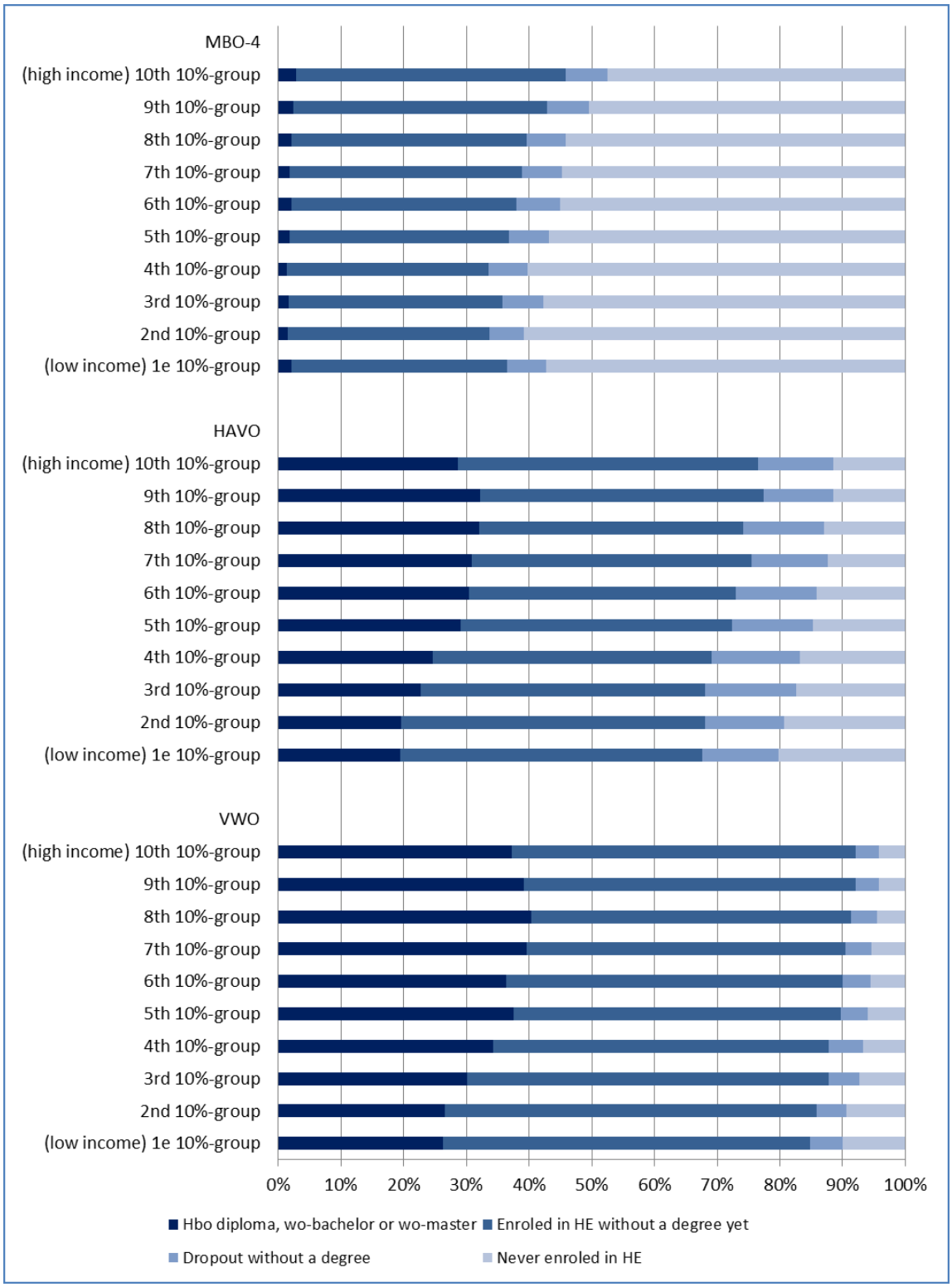
Year	1995/96	2000/01	2005/06	2010/11	2011/12*	2012/13*
Higher education						
Total	448,311	478,997	562,728	658,974	669,041	662,840
Native	374,118	375,386	428,389	480,944	484,767	477,383
Non-native (Western)	38,568	39,795	52,808	73,991	74,127	70,871
Non-native (non-Western)	26,086	41,276	69,399	93,315	95,950	95,638
Unknown	9,539	22,540	12,132	10,724	14,197	18,948
Universities						
Total	177,746	166,299	205,886	242,345	245,322	241,321
Native	146,802	132,384	155,718	173,170	173,201	168,619
Non-native (Western)	17,871	16,471	22,288	34,504	34,979	33,683
Non-native (non-Western)	10,823	13,664	23,849	31,860	32,379	31,561
Unknown	2,250	3,780	4,031	2,811	4,763	7,458
UAS institutions						
Total	270,565	312,698	356,842	416,629	423,719	421,519
Native	227,316	243,002	272,671	307,774	311,566	308,764
Non-native (Western)	20,697	23,324	30,520	39,487	39,148	37,188
Non-native (non-Western)	15,263	27,612	45,550	61,455	63,571	64,077
Unknown	7,289	18,760	8,101	7,913	9,434	11,490

Source: CBS, 2013.

4.16 With regard to the gender balance, women have gradually gained stronger representation in HE than men. In 1995, 46 per cent of university students and 49 per cent of UAS students were female and in 2012 this was 51 per cent and 52 per cent, respectively (CBS, 2013). The strongest increase in female participation took place in the 1960s and 70s.

4.17 A more in-depth study by CBS (Kazemier, 2013) shows the HE status of students on the 31st of August 2011 for youngsters from different parental income groups who on the 1st of October 2005 were enrolled in various pre-qualifying secondary education tracks. These data are presented in Figure 4.3 below.

Figure 4.3: Enrolment in HE on 1 August 2011 by entrance qualification on 31st October 2005 and parental income level



Source: Kazemier, 2013 (CBS).

4.18 The figure shows that students with a pre-university (VWO) qualification are the most likely to enrol in HE and to complete a degree. Students from higher income families show slightly higher enrolment and success ratios.

4.19 The data shown by the official statistics are also confirmed and enriched by other data, like from the biennial surveys among students, the so-called Student Monitor which is also used for the EUROSTUDENT2 project (Van den Broek *et al*., 2011). This student monitor shows the following characteristics of the student population for the 2003–2009 period:

- The proportion of female students has slightly increased, particularly in universities. Between 2003 their share increased from 48 per cent to 51 per cent. In Science and Engineering the proportion of female students is 15 per cent in UAS and 24 per cent in universities.
- The average age of students was about 24.5 years in 2003 and decreased to 23.3 years in 2009.
- The proportion of part-time students decreased from 14 per cent to 12 per cent. In 2009 this was about 16 per cent in UAS and only 5 per cent in universities.
- The proportion of ethnic minority students (non-native non-Western students) slightly increased from 11 per cent to 13 per cent.
- The proportion of pre-university qualified students in the UAS sector declined from 21 per cent to 15 per cent.
- The proportion of pre-university qualified students from lower income groups (based on parental income) is starting to increase. Students in UAS more frequently are from lower-income groups than students in universities.
- The proportion of students that had a full-time paid job before they went to HE has increased to almost 35 per cent. Often this is just a ‘gap-year’.
- The number of mature students of 28 years and over increased up to 2004 but afterwards stabilised at around 75,000 students (around 11 per cent of the total student population). About 65 per cent of them are enrolled in part-time programmes.
- The Student Monitor of 2000 shows that the proportion of UAS students from families with a higher education degree is about 38 per cent and in universities about 63 per cent. In 2007 the Student Monitor shows almost similar values: 41 per cent for UAS students and 62 per cent for university students. However, the proportion of students from less-educated family backgrounds has decreased from 33 per cent in UAS and 18 per cent in universities in 2007 to 24 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively.
- In 2000, parents of students in universities have significantly higher monthly net income than parents of UAS students (€2943 and €2515, respectively). In 2007 this was €3656 and €3082, respectively.
- The previous two bullets indicate that students in universities generally come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds than UAS students. However, the difference is

[2] http://www.eurostudent.eu/.

decreasing slightly which can probably be explained by the average increase of the middle income groups and general education attainment levels in the Netherlands.

Study success: retention, dropout, study progress and completion rates

4.20 An important topic in Dutch HE is study success, including retention, dropout, study progress, completion rates and time-to-degree. However, data are scarce and spread over various sources using different definitions.

Trends in study progress

4.21 Study progress can be measured in various ways. In the Student Monitor it is measured as the proportion of courses that students have completed compared to their duration of stay in a study programme (Van den Broek *et al*., 2011). A study progress percentage of 80 per cent reflects that a student has completed 80 per cent of the courses that he or she could have completed if (s)he studied "nominally" (completing all courses followed).

4.22 Looking at the trend data from the Student Monitor, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Study progress was relatively stable between 2004 and 2008 and shows a substantial increase in 2009. On average, university students show a progress rate around 80 per cent (going up to 85 per cent in 2009). In UAS institutions, students showed a study progress rate around 88 per cent which increased to 95 per cent in 2009. The only tentative explanation might be that this is a result of the reduction in the period students are eligible for student grants to only the nominal duration of study programmes since 2007.
- In UAS institutions men and women show equal progress rates, while in universities women score about 5 per cent better than men.
- Students from non-native non-Western backgrounds not only show lower progress than native students (except for 2009) but also show a less stable pattern.
- Students from lower socio-economic status groups (based on parental education and income) hardly show any differences in study progress, though the whole group of university students shows lower progress than the UAS students.
- In UAS institutions, students with a pre-university entrance qualification (VWO) show higher study progress than those with a vocational entrance qualification (MBO4). Students with the direct secondary entrance qualification (HAVO) show the least progress.
- Students who indicate that they put more effort into their studies also show higher progress rates than students who indicate that they put insufficient effort into their studies.
- In the period between 2001 and 2009 students substantially increased the number of hours per week they spent on their studies. In UAS students increased from 28 to 37 hours per week and university students from 22 to 33 hours per week. They all spent

on average about 10 hours per week on paid work. Students indicate that this hardly influences their study progress.

4.23 Students with a disability on average show lower study progress than regular HE students. This is particularly true at UAS institutions (Van den Broek *et al*., 2011). Patterns are relatively stable over time. However, students with a disability spend more hours per week on their studies than regular students, both in UAS institutions and universities. They particularly spend more time on self-study at home. Surprisingly, they themselves are less positive about their study efforts as they are more often unhappy about their own study efforts. Expectedly, they spend on average fewer hours on paid work, generally 1 or 2 hours less per week than regular students.

4.24 In general, students with a disability are slightly less optimistic about their successful completion of a study programme.

Dropouts

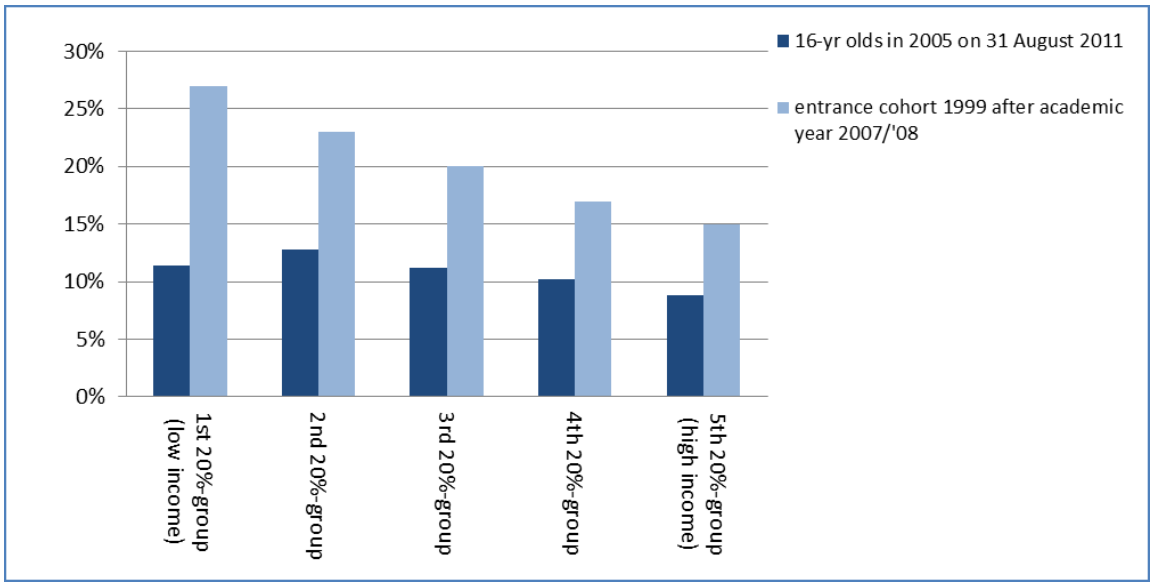
4.25 Not all students leave HE with a degree. In the UAS sector, quite a bit of analysis has been done on withdrawals, particularly by entrance qualification (*HBO-raad*, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009, 2008). Various entrance cohorts show relatively stable dropout ratios: about 15 per cent after 1 year of study, 21 per cent after 3 years and 24 per cent after 5 years of study. On average, dropouts stop after 30 months of study.

4.26 Students from ethnic minority backgrounds show a dropout rate of 19 per cent after 1 year, which is higher than the average. Students with a vocational entrance qualification (MBO) have the highest likelihood to dropout (21 per cent after 1 year and 28 per cent after 3 years). Students with a pre-university entrance qualification show the lowest dropout ratios (7 per cent versus 9 per cent). However, students with a general secondary entrance qualification (HAVO) show the highest switch ratio, implying that they most often change study programmes (26 per cent).

4.27 Another interesting fact is that students from non-native non-Western backgrounds take longer to complete their studies compared to native students.

4.28 A recent CBS study (Kazemier, 2013) shows that in HE students with a HAVO entrance qualification withdraw substantially more often than students with a VWO or MBO entrance qualification This can be explained by the fact that VWO candidates are generally better prepared academically. Kazemier (2013) also explored a potential relationship between dropout rates and parental income level. She compared the data on the HE status in 2011 of youngsters that were 16 in 2005 with the results of the HE entrance cohort of 1999 in 2008. The results are shown in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: Dropout from HE without a degree by parental income



Source: Kazemier, 2013 (CBS)

4.29 Figure 4.4 indicates that the 2005 cohort of 16-year-olds does not show much difference in dropout ratios for different parental income groups. However, this was measured at one point in time. A closer analysis of one student cohort, those who started in 1999, shows that, by 2008, students from the lowest income groups drop out almost twice as often as those from the highest income groups. This suggests that socioeconomic status does have an impact on the likelihood to withdraw from HE.

Completion rates and duration of studies

4.30 Closely linked to the data on dropouts are the data on completion rates. Official statistics of Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2013) show detailed analyses of the proportion of students who started in a particular year that finally get a degree after a number of years. These data are presented in Tables 4.6 and 4.7 for UAS students and university students, respectively. Table 4.6 shows the proportion of students that get a degree by the number of years they studied for various starting cohorts. The table shows the different rates for native students, for non-native Western students and for non-native non-Western students. It becomes apparent from this table that native students overall show the highest completion rates and non-native non-Western students the lowest completion rates. The differences become particularly apparent after 4 years of study. After 9 years, about 75 per cent of native students earned a degree. For non-native Western students this is close to 70 per cent and for non-native non-Western students only 60 per cent. In general, after 6 years these proportions do not go up that much anymore, which means that most UAS students take less than 5 years to complete their 4-year bachelor's programmes.

Table 4.6: First-year UAS students that get a degree, by duration of studies and ethnicity

		% getting a degree						
Date	Number starting	after 3 yrs	after 4 yrs	after 5 yrs	after 6 yrs	after 7 yrs	after 8 yrs	after 9 yrs
Native								
1995	**52124**	4	42	60	66	69	71	73
2000	**60855**	9	43	58	65	69	72	73
2001	**58962**	10	44	59	66	70	72	74
2002	**57855**	10	44	60	67	71	73	75
2003	**62873**	10	44	59	67	71	73	75
2004	**64267**	9	42	58	66	70	72	
2005	**65116**	9	40	56	64	69		
2006	**65969**	8	38	54	63			
2007	**66596**	7	37	55				
2008	**67131**	7	37					
2009	**70892**	6						
Non-native Western								
1995	**4736**	5	32	48	55	59	62	63
2000	**6426**	7	34	49	57	61	64	66
2001	**6510**	10	36	52	60	64	66	68
2002	**6725**	12	39	54	61	65	68	70
2003	**7388**	14	40	54	61	65	68	69
2004	**7945**	13	39	53	60	63	66	
2005	**7744**	13	39	54	60	65		
2006	**8410**	12	37	52	60			
2007	**8602**	12	37	53				
2008	**8994**	11	36					
2009	**9291**	10						
Non-native non-Western								
1995	**4276**	5	25	40	48	51	54	56
2000	**8539**	6	25	39	48	53	56	58
2001	**9513**	8	28	42	50	55	58	60
2002	**10549**	8	29	43	51	56	59	60
2003	**11143**	9	29	43	51	56	58	60
2004	**11683**	8	27	41	49	54	57	
2005	**11778**	7	26	40	48	54		
2006	**12704**	5	23	36	45			
2007	**13297**	5	21	36				
2008	**14254**	5	20					
2009	**15289**	4						

Source: CBS, 2013.

Table 4.7: First-year university students that get a degree, by duration of studies and ethnicity

		% getting a degree after						
Starting in:	Number starting	3 yrs	4 yrs	5 yrs	6 yrs	7 yrs	8 yrs	9 yrs
Native								
1995	**24130**	7	12	32	51	64	71	75
2000	**25633**	9	21	42	61	74	79	82
2001	**26973**	12	28	51	68	76	81	83
2002	**27045**	22	43	61	72	79	82	84
2003	**27253**	23	45	61	72	79	82	84
2004	**28213**	22	45	62	73	80	83	
2005	**28450**	24	47	65	75	82		
2006	**27869**	24	48	67	79			
2007	**28270**	24	51	72				
2008	**29471**	26	58					
2009	**31957**	29						
Non-native Western								
1995	**2667**	4	8	24	41	53	61	68
2000	**3191**	8	17	35	54	65	71	76
2001	**3534**	13	27	47	62	71	75	78
2002	**3501**	23	42	58	67	74	78	80
2003	**3651**	22	41	56	67	74	78	80
2004	**3828**	24	43	59	69	75	79	
2005	**3975**	24	45	60	70	77		
2006	**4274**	27	49	65	75			
2007	**4534**	31	54	70				
2008	**4773**	31	59					
2009	**5524**	37						
Non-native non-Western								
1995	**1921**	4	8	19	33	44	51	58
2000	**3087**	8	18	32	47	59	65	70
2001	**3729**	13	24	39	53	61	66	71
2002	**3899**	18	33	47	58	65	69	72
2003	**4138**	19	34	47	58	64	69	71
2004	**4306**	18	34	49	57	64	69	
2005	**4181**	19	38	52	63	70		
2006	**4382**	18	36	52	64			
2007	**4634**	19	40	57				
2008	**4708**	22	47					
2009	**5218**	24						

Source: CBS, 2013.

4.31 A similar exercise for university students shows the following results. After 9 years of study, close to 85 per cent of native students get a university degree. For non-native Western students this is 80 per cent and for non-native non-Western students 71 per cent. Overall, university students have higher completion rates than UAS students. Interestingly, from the 2001/2002 cohort onwards, the proportions of students earning a degree after 3 or 4 years substantially increases. This is because in 2002 the bachelor-master structure replaced the previous qualification structure of 4- and 5-year initial degree programmes with a structure of 3-year bachelor's programmes followed by 1- or 2-year master's programmes.

4.32 An analysis by the Universities' Association (VSNU, 2012, 2013) reveals that the proportion of students getting a bachelor's degree has increased in recent cohorts. In particular, male students are catching up with their female colleagues. The major reasons mentioned for this positive development are the introduction of the Binding Study Advise, the Hard Cut between the bachelor and the master (see section 7.4) and the "€3000 tuition penalty for those who study longer than the nominal duration plus 2 years" as will be discussed in section 8.2.

Progression into employment

4.33 Both the association for universities and that for the UAS institutions organise a labour market survey among their graduates every two years. These are called the "WO Monitor" for university graduates and the "HBO Monitor" for UAS graduates (VSNU, 2012; HBO raad, 2012).

4.34 Both monitors provide a few different measures of the labour market position of graduates, like the proportion of unemployed graduates, the duration before graduates find their first job, whether their job matches their qualification level, the extent to which their HE degree prepared them for the labour market and their satisfaction about their completed study programme.

4.35 The major results from the WO Monitor 2011 for university graduates are the following:

- Of the university graduates surveyed, 85 per cent are employed in the labour force, 7 per cent are unemployed and 7 per cent are not available for the labour market (study, internship, retired or handicapped).
- Alumni on average spend 2.7 months searching for a job (2.1 months in 2009). About 41 per cent get a job immediately after graduation, 45 per cent between 1 and 6 months, 11 per cent between 6 and 12 months and 3 per cent after more than 12 months.
- On average, 63 per cent have a job at university-master level or higher. This is 67 per cent for graduates who entered university through VWO. Only 52 per cent of those with a UAS degree as pre-qualification hold a job at master's level or higher. Overall, 21 per cent hold a job at the level of a UAS degree (this is 32 per cent for those with already a UAS degree). Only 4 per cent have a job at university-bachelor level.

- Those indicating that their qualification prepared them well to very well for the labour market account for 96 per cent; 4 per cent disagree with that. Among those unemployed about 9 per cent disagree.
- About 75 per cent indicate they would choose the same study programme again, 5 per cent would do the same but at a different university and 15 per cent would choose another programme. The latter response is particularly strong among those unemployed (29 per cent).

4.36 The labour market position of university graduates has worsened slightly due to the economic crisis, resulting in a slightly longer period before graduates find a job. Graduates from engineering programmes are the most positive about their studies in terms of preparation for the labour market. Social science studies are often regarded as too easy and too broad. The data from the WO Monitor do not show any relationships between entrance qualifications, ethnicity and labour market success.

4.37 The main major results from the HBO Monitor 2011 for UAS graduates are as follows:

- Unemployment 1.5 years after graduation has risen from 5.2 per cent in 2009 to 6.0 per cent in 2011. In 2007 it was only 3.1 per cent. HBO graduates are less often unemployed than university graduates (7.9 per cent).
- About 72 per cent of graduates had a job straight after graduation, another 14 per cent within 3 months after graduation.
- Graduates who studied part-time show better scores; they are less often unemployed, they have predominantly permanent jobs (81 per cent against 50 per cent for other graduates) and substantially higher monthly earnings.
- About 78 per cent of the graduates hold a job at UAS level or higher and 80 per cent indicate that the job closely relates to their area of study. About 73 per cent indicate that their function (or role) is very well or sufficiently related to their study programme.
- About 63 per cent of the graduates indicate that the UAS qualification is a good start for further development and they grade the preparation for the labour market at 6.6 (on a scale of 1 to 10). This is fine but not extremely positive.

4.38 Due to the slower economic development of the economy, the labour market position of graduates has worsened slightly, particularly resulting in higher unemployment rates. However, UAS graduates from health care and engineering programmes have even shown better labour market results than others. Students from arts programmes have shown a decrease in employability. Also, graduates from part-time study programmes are very successful in the labour market, probably because most of them already hold a job while studying. Though the graduate survey asks respondents to indicate their pre-HE qualification and their duration of studies, these data are not used to analyse labour market outcomes. Data on ethnic status are not requested. The next chapter further explores policies to widen participation.

5| Widening access and participation policies

Introduction

5.1 Access is always an important policy issue in the Netherlands. Since the mid-2000s, like other countries, the Dutch government decided to aim at the 50 per cent objective: by 2020 50 per cent of the workforce aged 25–34 should have a HE degree (OCW/EZ, 2009). The OECD statistics on this issue show a proportion of 38 per cent in 2009. The Veerman Committee (2010) argued that based on the ambition to become a top-five leading knowledge economy, the Netherlands should seriously invest to increase participation, particularly by non-traditional underrepresented student groups, such as mature students, part-time students, associate degree students, professional master's students and ethnic minority students.

5.2 Over the years, the student intake from vocational schools has increased in the UAS sector while the number of pre-university students has decreased because they more often go into university straight away. In terms of access this development is regarded as positive, but the relative increase in lower qualified students is regarded as negative from a quality perspective (Veerman Committee, 2010). This closely links to the new policy ambition to get to a situation of better qualified new entrants in HE. In the past, a number of measures were taken to increase the competence levels of primary and secondary education pupils in basic language, calculation, reading and science skills (OCW, 2011). The Education Inspectorate can now impose sanctions on schools that do not provide high enough examination levels (tested at the central Dutch exam for secondary school leavers). A sanction can be that a school gets a yellow card. After three yellow cards a school is put under strict supervision and in the end might lose its licence, but strict supervision means that the school gets a bad name and will lose pupils.

5.3 Since 2012/2013, secondary examination candidates were allowed to have one 'five' (not pass) for one of the key subjects (Dutch, English and Mathematics). If they score two 'fives' on these subjects they cannot graduate, even though they may score a total of two fives out of seven or eight subjects.

Reforms in secondary education

5.4 Structural reforms in secondary education have postponed the time at which the decision to select a specific education track has to be made, and have increased the permeability of the boundaries between tracks.

5.5 After the introduction of the Secondary Education Act of 1968, the structure of secondary education remained rather stable until the early 1990s. Then, in 1993/1994, a form of basic secondary education (*basisvorming*) was introduced in each of the four different types of secondary education. It essentially means that since then all pupils

have been taught the same core curriculum of fifteen subjects in the first 3 years of secondary education. For each of the fifteen subjects, national core objectives have been formulated. Schools can decide themselves how they intend to reach these objectives. The third year is flexible: either students continue with their basic education or work towards preparing for the second tier of secondary education (*bovenbouw*). In total, 80 per cent of the contents of the courses of basic education are determined nationally, the schools themselves – taking into account the needs and wishes of the pupils – can decide upon 20 per cent of the courses. The school advises the pupil and the parents/guardians what would be the most suitable (upper) secondary education option for the individual pupil after 2 years of basic education. The basic secondary education was evaluated in 2001 by the Education Council (Onderwijsraad, 2001). The major finding was that the new system led to a situation of fragmentation and overload for pupils as too many subjects were offered with too much diversity in terms of learning objectives. It was found to have a negative impact particularly on the performance of minority group students and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds who receive less motivational support in their families (Onderwijsraad, 2001). Even more so, most of the problems were found in secondary vocational education, the sector which already has a strong overrepresentation of students from weaker socio-economic backgrounds.

5.6 After basic secondary education, in principle two paths lie ahead of the pupils, the first being the VMBO route which prepares students for vocational education. In terms of size, about 60 per cent of pupils choose this vocationally oriented VMBO route whereas 40 per cent of the pupils opt for the preparatory tracks for HE, the HAVO/VWO route (CBS, 2013).

5.7 The new structure and contents of HAVO and VWO, preparing pupils for HE, comprised a number of changes in the second tier of secondary education (Peters and Terlouw, 1997). The first major change meant that the traditional set of six to eight subjects that students could choose for the final examinations was replaced in 1998 by four sets of about fifteen subjects in which pupils have to be examined. These four so-called profiles (*doorstroomprofielen*) prepare each student for a different study programme in HE. The four profiles are ‘culture and society’ (preparation for the social sciences, history, languages and culture), ‘economy and society’ (preparation for economics and social sciences), ‘nature and health’ (preparation for medical sciences and biology) and ‘nature and technology’ (preparation for natural sciences and engineering). Each profile includes a compulsory part (50 per cent) meant for general education, a profile part (30 per cent) to prepare for HE, and a free part (20 per cent) for personal development. The examinations consist of school examinations and national examinations.

5.8 A second major change refers to the organisation of the learning process. The traditional organisation of the learning process, which was mainly directed by the teachers, was replaced by a new approach in which pupils learn in a more active and autonomous way, designed to do justice to the differences between pupils. This new approach is termed *studiehuis* (study house) and was introduced in 1998. As a result, pupils are offered different learning routes, dependent on their talents, interests and pace. Furthermore, the teacher should be seen as assisting the whole learning process rather than simply implanting knowledge. This also implied that information and

communications technology (ICT) became more strongly integrated in secondary education and that schools also built special spaces in which pupils can work on their own (study landscapes). In the early years, many pupils complained that the philosophy of the new education model was not well implemented. From 2003 onwards, attitudes started to change, though a national committee (Dijsselbloem, 2008) concluded that the successive restructurings in secondary education had been driven too much by political and financial considerations rather than educational ones. The roles of teachers, pupils and parents were not well embedded. Vulnerable groups of pupils were put at particular risk. Since 2006, HEIs started to complain about the entrance level of students, particularly in regards to knowledge, language proficiency and mathematical skills.

5.9 The third change relates to the HE entrance requirements. Access to particular HE programmes requires a specific secondary education profile of secondary education rather than examination success in a few core subjects. For example, the university pharmacy degree programme requires candidates to have completed the 'nature and technology' profile, but HEIs may also admit students from other profiles on the basis of additional qualifications. In the example of pharmacy, pupils with a 'nature and health' profile may be admitted if they have studied chemistry courses in the free part of their profile.

5.10 A fourth change permits potential deficiencies to be overlooked before one enters a HE programme, whereas previously a shortfall in qualifications could be made up in the initial months of the HE programme.

5.11 Finally, the contents of secondary courses pay more attention to skills (design, problem solving, communication, co-operation, planning, etc.) rather than factual knowledge. This meant that some subject matter disappeared and was replaced by new courses designed to implant, for example, skills in information technology, management and organisation. In addition, all the profiles orientate students towards possible future study plans and professional career choices, so preparing pupils for the decisions to be made after secondary education.

5.12 Altogether, these reforms changed the knowledge and skill levels of incoming HE students. As access to HE in the Netherlands is open for all students with the right entrance qualifications, there was no selection mechanism that could easily sort out the deficiencies of students. There have been hardly any studies that could evaluate the real impact of the secondary education reforms on the proportions of pupils qualifying for further studies in HE (Commissie Dijsselbloem, 2008). However, statistics presented in Figure 4.1 (page 20) show that the number of people qualifying for HE has substantially increased and reflects a greater variety of pathways to HE. The increase in entrants with MBO and HAVO qualifications shows that the educational reforms may have had a positive impact on access to higher education. The public discussion, however, made clear that students from weaker socio-economic backgrounds were not supported at home to better qualify for HE. Because they need a more structured approach towards learning, they were the 'victims' of the reforms that led to fewer contact hours and more reliance on self-study. As such, these developments will not have stimulated widening access to HE (Commissie Dijsselbloem, 2008). The Education Council (Onderwijsraad, 2007) found that talent

development and transition into higher levels of learning can be further stimulated by increasing the quality of education in all secondary education tracks by setting or increasing minimum standards with regard to key competencies; to make the MBO structures less complicated in order to better prepare pupils for transition into HE; and to improve the quality and professional competencies of teachers.

Reforms in higher education

5.13 In the 1970s, the government proposed to reorganise university education into two tiers in order to make HE more accessible to larger numbers of students. As a result of this, in 1982 a two-tier system was implemented in university education by the so-called Two-Phases Structure Act (Tweede Kamer, 1980). The traditional programmes with a regular nominal duration of 5 years were shortened to 4-year undergraduate programmes leading to a "*doctorandus*" degree. These formed the first phase in the new university structure. The second phase would have to offer selective postdoctoral programmes with a maximum duration of two years. In practice only a few programmes were established in this second phase. One example was the creation of teacher training programmes in which university graduates could gain a teaching qualification within their field of study by following a one-year programme. As discussed in section 3.1, in 1984 the professional schools were upgraded to official HEIs, then called *hogescholen* (HBO or UAS). Figure 4.2 (page 20) shows that the rapid increase in university education during the 1960s and 70s stopped in the early 1980s and stabilised until 2003 after which it substantially increased again. In the UAS sector the rapid expansion of enrolments lasted until 2010. The continuous increase after 1984 shows that the UAS sector really offered access to HE for the masses.

5.14 In 1986, a new student financing mechanism was introduced, replacing family allowances and tax benefits for parents and some means-tested grants for students with a system of direct student support with basic grants, loans and means-tested supplementary grants for students themselves. Instead of the envisaged decline in student numbers, this has been one of the reasons that participation in HE kept growing. Increasing numbers of students moved to live away from their parents. This will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

5.15 Another important change in the structure of HE degree programmes was established by the so-called Harmonisation Act. This act not only equalised the tuition levels of HBO and university students, but it also enabled students who already held a HBO degree to obtain a university degree in the limited period of 2 years, and vice versa. Before 1988 such students would have been required to complete a full 4-year programme (Tweede Kamer, 1987). This boosted the number of UAS graduates continuing on to a university degree (Vossensteyn en Goedegebuure, 1992).

5.16 In 1995, because the study load in engineering was regarded as relatively heavy and the labour market wanted to have better prepared engineers, technology programmes were required to extend the nominal duration of their degrees from 4 to 5 years. In 1997 the same happened for science programs, such as biology, chemistry, mathematics and physics. Instead of attracting more students, science and

engineering over time got a stigma of being difficult and dull and did not attract more students.

5.17 In the wake of the Bologna Agreement, the Dutch government formulated plans to further reform the degree structure. Early in 2002, the Dutch parliament approved a change in the Law on Higher Education and Research (WHW), making it legally possible for Dutch HEIs to grant bachelor's and master's degrees from the academic year 2002/2003. Under the "BaMa" system, university students will first follow a bachelor's programme lasting at least 3 years and will then be able to enter a specialised master's programme. The existing regulations on the maximum time students can study will remain in force. The main motive for the Dutch government's implementation of the BaMa structure was to set the necessary conditions for a modern and internationally oriented HE (The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2000). The BaMa structure is designed to make the Dutch HE system more flexible and open to accommodate new societal developments like internationalisation, globalisation and ICT. The system should be flexible enough to meet the needs of students of all ages and open enough to allow Dutch students to study abroad, as well as allowing foreign students to enter the Dutch system. Though enabling greater flexibility for students, international mobility and mobility after the bachelor phase within the Dutch HE system remained limited. Vague transition rules between bachelor's and master's programmes within universities and financial interests to keep as many students within their own institution prohibited many students from being mobile. In addition, bachelor's graduates from UAS faced serious selection and bridging programmes before they may be admitted to a master's programme. This tempered the initial enthusiasm of UAS bachelors to enter a university master's programme, as can be seen in Figure 4.1 (page 20).

Information for prospective students

5.18 Structural changes are not the only way to impact on the choices students make. Government may also provide (potential) students with detailed and objective information on the basis of which they can make a carefully considered decision on whether to study, what and where. Ideally, the information provision regarding student choice (and access) not only gives insights into what study opportunities there are, but also about the content of programmes, their (relative) quality and what labour market opportunities they open up.

5.19 The communication and information strategies of Dutch HEIs have developed in three stages (Jansen, 1996). Until the mid-1980s, the information presented to future students was sober, independent and focused purely on the content of study programmes.

5.20 In the second stage, from 1985 to 1994, the inflow of new entrants levelled off. Because of governmental cutbacks to the education budget, the HE sector gradually turned into a market where institutions had to compete for students. A particularly visible manifestation was the appointment of market research personnel and public relations officers as well as the hiring of professional advertising firms. Communication with, and recruitment of, future students became highly professional. Institutions tried

to create their own images by conducting large advertising campaigns in newspapers and magazines, and by developing information services for secondary school pupils.

5.21 In the third stage, 1994 to 1995, a slight decrease in student numbers, accompanied by a move towards performance-based funding, resulted in institutional policies directed at limiting the actual duration of study and attracting particular groups of students. Under pressure from the increased amount of information available on the quality and performance of institutions, the communication strategies towards potential target groups were focused more on programme content, quality and student performance. The scores in national surveys on student satisfaction, the outcomes of quality assessments, the position of graduates in the labour market, the ICT facilities offered by the institutions, as well as the ranking of cities in terms of attractiveness to students, are all used in promotional campaigns (Jansen, 1996). In the mid-1990s, a number of annual country-wide publications were set up to provide prospective students with objective information and inform them of the outcomes of various studies. De Keuzegids Hoger Onderwijs, De Beste Studies of the magazine Elsevier, and De Studiekeuze Barometer, Studentweb.nl, convey the outcomes of the quality assurance processes as well as monitoring the labour market position of HBO and university graduates (Ramaekers en Huijgen, 2000; Allen *et al*., 2000).

5.22 In 2006, a new national web-portal with information about HE studies was established by the ministry of education: Studychoice123 (Studiekeuze123: https://www.studiekeuze123.nl/). This became an independent foundation in 2009, collecting all kinds of information on study programmes and institutions. Many other student choice databases are now linked to this portal. They also organise an annual national student survey (*Nationale Studenten Enquête*) which provides students' opinions on various study-related issues at the programme and institutional level. These data are increasingly used for further research and by students who want to get informed about their future study choices.

5.23 Until recently, data from student choice information instruments were only used by relatively small proportions of prospective students. Most students used visits to the HEIs to "taste the atmosphere". Many secondary schools take their pupils to UAS institutions and university campuses in their region. Also the HEIs have become more aggressive in their own information and recruitment campaigns. In 2009, when Studiekeuze123 became an independent foundation, the HEIs were also urged by the ministry to sign a code of conduct regarding recruitment behaviour. They now can earn a "seal" for proper and honest marketing and recruitment. This has to help to prevent students from making wrong student choices leading to study switch and dropout. There are no statistics on the real impact of such measures, though the numbers of students visiting these websites are very high.

6| Target groups for widening access and participation

Information about target groups

6.1 The relevant statistical data for this topic were presented in Chapter 4.

6.2 The policy issues that particularly relate to widening access and participation are presented below, including more specific information campaigns for target groups of students, the establishment of the Open University, professional master's programmes and Associate Degree programmes.

Specific information campaigns

6.3 Alongside the growth in the general information available for prospective students, particular developments in student choice and in the labour market triggered the government to initiate a number of specific programmes to stimulate the participation of specific social groups and to encourage access into certain degree programmes. The major examples concern the participation of women and enrolments in science, engineering and teacher training. Teacher training is a special case as there are substantial fluctuations in participation that most often do not correspond with demands in the labour market.

Female participation

6.4 In 1990, the government started a general campaign to make women more aware of their career opportunities within society and to become more independent in both a socio-cultural and socio-economic sense (Van den Broek en Voeten, 2002). The campaign is known as "*een slimme meid is op haar toekomst voorbereid*" (a smart lady is prepared for her future). This was one of the initiatives to focus the attention of women on the opportunities of HE for them. Until the 1980s, the Netherlands had a very traditional working ethos among women. As soon as they began raising a family, it was regarded as normal to quit work and care for the family. During the 1990s, changing this perception was one of the main arguments for the feminisation of HE. It is not clear to what extent these campaigns contributed, but the participation of women soon outpaced that of men from the mid-1990s. However the strongest growth in female participation happened in the 1960s and 70s (CBS, 2013).

Science and engineering

6.5 Young people show declining interest in science and engineering programmes and enrolments continue to drop. To reverse this trend a number of government campaigns have been started over the past decade and a half. These campaigns have aimed at increasing student participation in technical sciences. The major campaigns were '*Kies exact'* (Choose appropriately, as well as Choose science), which ran from 1987 till 1989; and "*Thea studeert techniek*" (Thea is studying engineering), also running in the

late 1980s (Van den Broek en Voeten, 2002). The campaign "*Kies exact*", and as a part of it "*Slaag exact*" (Get an appropriate/science degree), aimed at stimulating secondary education pupils to take final exams in some science and engineering courses in order to prepare for further study in those disciplines. A wide range of channels were used to promote the campaign: brochures, posters, advertisements, billboards and television commercials (Van den Broek en Voeten, 2002).

6.6 Other campaigns were directed specifically at strengthening interest in engineering, particularly amongst females. In the early 1990s, one such campaign, "*Technika 10 Nederland*", provided courses for girls in order to interest them in science and engineering. The evaluation of the outcomes of the campaign was ambiguous: in some cases participating women were more likely to continue their studies, while in other cases they were not.

6.7 Between 1995 and 1998 the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and the Ministry of Social affairs together set up the "*Actieplan Vrouwen en Techniek*" (Action plan: Women in Engineering) to enlarge the presence of females in engineering and to increase female participation in scientific studies and the professions. Finally, a number of theatre groups promoted engineering by visiting schools, and many professional interest groups have tried to raise the profile of science and engineering.

6.8 The effectiveness of the various initiatives to raise the interest and participation in science and engineering programs is questionable: participation in most traditional science and engineering programs is collapsing and growing participation in new science and engineering programs cannot make up for that decline (Kaiser, 2003). Yet, the campaigns have put science and engineering on the political agenda and awakened the general awareness of the importance of science and engineering for society. Students' choices however, are still based mainly on personal interest and future employment perspectives. So far, a negative image of science and engineering has kept many potential students away from these programs (Van den Broek en Voeten, 2002). A study was set up to measure whether students could be seduced to choose engineering programmes by cancelling tuition fees. It was found that this could only lead to up to 5 per cent extra engineering students at the cost of millions of euros (Felsö *et al*., 2000).

6.9 In 2004, the minister launched a programme to stimulate participation in science and engineering through offering targeted scholarships to students, the so-called *bètabeurzen* (Faber *et al*., 2010). These scholarships of €1500 each could be distributed by individual HEIs according to their own criteria. The institutions interested applied for a budget at the Platform Beta & Techniek (in total the budget was €2.25 million and almost 1500 scholarships were allocated). In total ten universities and 14 UAS participated in the experiments with students who started in 2004 and 2005. In general, students would receive the scholarship upon successful completion of the first year or the bachelor's degree within the nominal duration (or slightly more). Because the scholarship was granted only afterwards, they did not attract additional students, as was expected beforehand. In addition, only very few students indicated that they showed more study progress in order to receive the scholarship. Most recipients only regarded the *bètabeurs* as a windfall.

6.10 During the 2000s, science and engineering have been integrated in primary education by getting young children acquainted in a very simple and friendly way with technological 'tricks'. In secondary education specific streams are established in which pupils can work on technological projects, so-called *technasia*. Regardless of all efforts, it does not attract serious numbers of extra pupils to the science profiles in upper secondary education. Therefore, in May 2013, many societal stakeholders signed the "National Science Pact 2020".[3] This action programme was funded with €500 million and aims to stimulate pupils to choose engineering programmes, to get more graduates with an engineering diploma to take an engineering job and to stimulate those who work in an engineering job to remain in that profession. A wide array of instruments will be used to inform and support people in many age groups and in all education settings to choose a science and engineering career. This is the first time social partners like business, local and regional governments and the whole education system have set up such a broad encompassing approach to stimulate science and engineering in order to prevent the expected future shortage of engineers in all sectors of our economy.

Establishing the Open University

6.11 In 1984, the ministry established an "open university" called the *Open Universiteit* (OU) in order to provide students who for various reasons did not enrol in regular HE with an opportunity to get a HE degree. This was called "second chance education". The Open University was meant to be an innovative university offering full degree programmes through distance education supported by modern didactical approaches and along a modular structure. Gradually the Open University developed as an institution that devised educational structures and approaches that are integrating modern information and communication technologies. It was intended that the OU would also closely collaborate with traditional HEIs in order to help them develop modern didactical approaches to better support the needs and demands of modern students.

6.12 In the philosophy of "second chance education" all citizens can follow courses and modules at the OU without any further entrance qualifications. The courses and modules can be accumulated up to obtaining a final degree at bachelor's or even master's level. In practice, the large majority of OU students only take one or a few modules (Faber en Vossensteyn, 2009). In addition, most OU students already hold a bachelor's or master's degree and only use the OU for upgrading their knowledge and skills in particular areas. This means that the OU hardly addresses its envisaged target groups with the ambition to widen participation in HE. Therefore, both the Veerman Committee (Veerman *et al.*, 2010) as well as the Ministry of Education (OCW, 2011) indicated that the position and funding structure of the OU should be reconsidered in order to align better with a new strategy or with the originally intended objectives.

[3] http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/convenanten/2013/05/13/nationaal-techniekpact-2020.html.

Professional master's programmes

6.13 Since the implementation of the bachelor-master structure in the Netherlands in 2002, UAS bachelor graduates and employers argue for professional master's programmes at UAS institutions. Until then, master's programmes could only be offered at the more academically oriented universities. Employers also recognise an increased need for vocationally oriented employees that are educated to as high a level as possible. Gradually, UAS institutions started to develop a limited number of professional master's offerings, particularly in professions like nursing and teacher training. After a few years of stimulation funds, the government did not want to fully fund a strong expansion of UAS bachelor's programmes. However, the Veerman Committee (2010) recommended that professional master's programmes should be more structurally embedded in the UAS sector because the Netherlands has a limited number of master's graduates compared to other countries and labour market analysis shows that a number of professions are developing in such a way that bachelor's qualifications are no longer sufficient. This was also recognised in the strategic vision of the ministry (OCW, 2011). Due to limited financial capacity, from 2012 onwards the number of publicly funded master's programmes can be expanded, but only in a controlled way. This means that a professional master's programme at a UAS institution has to meet the following requirements:

- Relate to an explicit (sectoral) labour market demand.
- Relate to practice-oriented research at the UAS.
- Relate to the profile of the UAS.
- Not compete with existing privately funded master's offerings.
- Be complementary to university master's offerings through an explicit professional profile.

6.14 So far, the number of students in UAS master's programmes is steadily growing from around 8,000 in 2000 to about 12,000 in 2012. This shows that this type of programme satisfies particular needs among students and graduates already in the labour market. Though no official statistics are collected yet, the majority of students entering professional master's programmes have a (UAS) bachelor entrance qualification. It is not known how many of those students would otherwise have followed a university master's programme. But given the specific demands a UAS master's offering has to meet, it appears that the professional master's programmes address a new target market and thus widen participation effectively, though only for those already holding a bachelor's degree.

Associate degrees

6.15 In 2006/2007, initiated by the ministry of education, a number of pilot Associate Degree programmes started. These are 2-year programmes that can operate as a part of 4-year UAS bachelor's programme, leading to a self-standing degree: the Associate Degree (AD). Associate Degree programmes particularly focus on practice-oriented learning and are designed to increase and widen participation in HE. The target group includes graduates form upper secondary vocational education (MBO4), either directly

after graduation or following a number of years of work experience. The AD programmes particularly address the difficulties many MBO graduates experience when they have to choose a full 4-year UAS bachelor's programme. They often indicate that a 4-year bachelor's programme is too long for them. Therefore, AD programmes are organised in close collaboration between a UAS institution and a vocational institution. The AD degree is awarded by the UAS and after completing an AD degree, students are given the opportunity to transfer into the aligned bachelor's programme. Because the AD has a strong focus on practical elements, the transferring students need to do more theoretical work in the final two years of the bachelor's programme.

6.16 In 2006, 18 AD programmes were established, starting with around 450 students. In 2007 the number of programmes increased to 55 and students to 1600. By 2009 there were more than 2200 students (De Graaf and Van den Berg, 2011). The evaluation by De Graaf and Van den Berg (2011) offered the following results:

- Many AD students choose such a programme for its relatively short duration. Half of the AD students had considered following a full 4-year UAS bachelor's programme.
- The AD serves its target group: graduates with an MBO degree who directly or after some years of work experience return to education.
- Most students study part-time while also having a job.
- The AD is also used by students who drop out of the related bachelor's programme.
- Half of the AD graduates transfer into the related bachelor's programme.
- Most AD graduates easily find a job that is satisfactory and with a salary between MBO and UAS graduate level.
- Many AD students and graduates who stayed in their existing job got promoted into a higher function.

6.17 All in all, it looks like the AD partially serves a new target group of students and also fills a gap in the labour market. The target groups of individual AD programmes are often highly specialised, particularly in engineering programmes. Even though the Veerman Committee (2010) recommended structurally embedding the AD into the Dutch HE system, the growth in numbers of AD programmes and students recently slowed down a bit. The ministry expressed the ambition to have about 15 per cent of UAS students in 2020 enrolled in AD programmes (OCW, 2011). However, the ministry will have to further stimulate UAS and MBO institutions to take further steps, as it often appears difficult to collaborate and offer AD programmes in the larger disciplinary areas like Business, Social sciences and Teacher Training.

7| Retention, completion and progression

Improving retention, completion and progression

7.1 The relevant statistical data for this topic were presented in Chapter 4.

7.2 The policy issues that particularly relate to retention, completion and progression are presented below. These include the issue of bringing forward the application date, selection and matching, Binding Study Advice and the “Hard Cut”, the large-city initiative to stimulate study success among non-native students, and performance agreements.

Bringing forward the application date

7.3 In recent decades, prospective students gradually postponed further and further the moment at which they made their final decisions about what to study and where. In order to attract as many students as possible for funding reasons, HEIs accommodated this behaviour by gradually extending the deadlines for applying for a study programme. This put a lot of pressure on the administrative capacities of institutions as well as the logistical issues at the beginning of the first semester immediately after the summer holidays. Research among students (through the Student Monitor) has shown that students who apply late (only in July and August) are more likely to drop out or to change studies (Warps *et al*., 2010).

7.4 Therefore the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences commissioned a study to examine the effect of bringing forward the final date until which students can apply for admission to a HEI and study programme. This study found that there is a high correlation between late applications and the extent to which students feel connected to a study programme and their own perceived likelihood of graduation (Warps *et al*., 2010). Connectivity and self-perception of study success are important factors in actual study success (study progress and successful graduation). The study further shows that bringing forward the application date will not by itself enhance the quality of the decision or the motivation to study. However, bringing forward the application date will put more pressure on prospective students to make up their minds at an earlier stage, particularly while secondary schools, national information campaigns and HEIs organize information events and offer services, support and guidance through online student choice tools, intake interviews and information consultation talks. These activities may all help students to get information and make better choices.

7.5 The report recommends that HE use the 1st of July as the ultimate date to apply for HE. Since 2011, many HEIs have adopted this recommendation and many bring the application date forward, some as far as 1st of May. One possible visible effect of this is that the study choice information site (Studiekeuze123) has had substantially more visitors than in previous years. Effects on dropout rates are not visible yet.

Selection and matching

7.6 Institutions have not only brought forward the application date but, as a follow-up on the recommendation of the Veerman Committee (Veerman *et al*., 2010), many institutions also started implementing "soft selection", which is also called "matching mechanisms". These include online or physical information sessions, self-assessments, motivation letters, entrance tests and intake interviews. All of these instruments result in advice to the prospective students as to whether a particular programme fits their interests, motivation and/or capability. The advice is not binding, but helps students prepare much better for their actual study choice and it helps institutions and study programmes to sharpen their profiles compared to similar programmes elsewhere. In 2009/2010 about 4000 intake interviews were conducted in Dutch HE. This number has substantially increased since then due to a wider implementation of this practice across the system (OCW, 2011). There are no evaluations yet about the impact of these "matching instruments" on the real performance and success of students.

Binding Study Advice and the "Hard Cut"

7.7 Since the 1980s students have had to successfully complete all subjects in the first study year within two academic years in order to progress into the second year of study. In 1993, the Higher Education Act allowed institutions to provide "Binding Study Advice" (BSA) which demands students leave the programme in case of low study progression in the first year. Since then, some institutions have started to develop soft forms of BSA to advise students to de-enrol from a particular study programme due to low performance at an earlier stage. Since 2005 HEIs were legally expected to expel students from their programme after 1 year due to very low study success. As such, institutions gradually started to provide students who seriously underperformed with BSA to leave the programme after a year. Early adopters started this in 2006 and 2007. In 2010 the Education Inspectorate published an evaluation of this practice (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2010). This study indicated that most institutions had implemented such a policy, either more formally or more informally. However, a number of institutions or programmes did not have clear procedures, including for example a preliminary warning system. This meant that the criteria for BSA were sharpened in 2010. Late adopters only fully implemented BSA institution-wide in 2012. Though the impact has not been fully evaluated, it is generally believed that the BSA has helped to increase the number of students that more rapidly transfer into second-year courses and complete their whole programme within the nominal duration of studies. This is slightly visible in the success rates presented in Tables 4.6 and 4.7.

7.8 In February 2013, the minister announced that institutions may start to experiment with BSA for later study years. Thus, a few institutions are starting to develop such practices in the second and third study years too.

7.9 A related but different issue is the so-called "Hard Cut". With the introduction of the bachelor-master structure, many universities allowed flexible transition between bachelor's and master's programmes. In other words, many students who were about to graduate from their bachelor's course and move onto the master's programme still had one or two bachelor's modules, or even their bachelor's thesis, to complete.

Universities allowed this practice primarily for financial reasons, in order to retain their own bachelor's students for a successive master's programme. After an intense public debate about the advantages and disadvantages of such flexible transition rules, the ministry decided to introduce the "Hard Cut" (*harde knip*) from academic year 2012/2013. Since then, it is no longer possible to enrol in a master's programme without a completed bachelor's degree. The major argument was that the bachelor's degree has to be regarded as a final qualification after which graduates can enter the labour market, or to follow a master's programme of their choice at an institution of their choice. This would stimulate mobility and flexibility for students as well as pushing students to show more study progress. In addition, this also stimulates more fair competition among students that apply for places on master's programmes. This becomes more important as universities increasingly start using their right to select students for master's programmes. Though no hard statistical data are available on the real impact of this measure, recent statistics on the bachelor success rate show an increase right after the "Hard Cut" has been introduced. This is proven by the substantial increase in the completion rates after 3 and 4 years for the most recent entrance cohorts presented in Table 4.6.

Large city initiative to improve study success for non-native students

7.10 In 2008, with the establishment of a new government, agreements were made about additional investment in the study success of students from non-native non-Western backgrounds. Based on that, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture made agreements with five UAS institutions (G5) in the four large cities in the Western part of the Netherlands also called the *Randstad*. These UAS were: The Hague UAS, UAS Utrecht, UAS Rotterdam, the UAS of Amsterdam and UAS INHolland. These institutions have high numbers of non-native students which leads to serious problems in relation to quality, dropout rates and study success. The five institutions would share an extra budget of €12 million between them until 2012/2013 on the condition that they would improve the results of non-native students. In 2009 for each UAS more concrete target agreements were made in relation to student dropout and first-year success rates.

7.11 In 2010, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture initiated a monitoring study to evaluate the performance of the G5 institutions on the quality and success of students from non-native non-Western backgrounds and the institutional policies to address this (Hobéon, 2011). The evaluation was largely qualitative in nature and took place at the end of 2010. It appeared that two out of five institutions showed unsatisfactory progress towards the objectives: they did not have a coherent vision on how to improve study success among the target groups; and the policy instruments and initiatives were too diverse and fragmented within the organisations. As such, the evaluation panel was not convinced that the instruments and policy interventions would (potentially) lead to improved study success among non-native students. Based on the good practices (partially) detected in the other three institutions the review panel recommended the following:

> Integrate policies for non-native students into more generic measures to increase study success.

- UAS institutions need to collect data and develop analytical tools to analyse study success in detail.
- Institutions should invest in good practices, like mentoring and peer coaching (older students supervising first-year students); but also to appoint "outreach coaches" to inform students at qualifying secondary schools; to use an integrated approach towards study success including all aspects of study and study support services; and finally to appoint more non-native staff.
- Establish clear responsibility structures and leadership commitment.

7.12 No further data have yet been collected on the real impact of these measures at the individual institutions. A final evaluation will take place when the project is finished (end 2013).

Performance agreements

7.13 The 2010 Committee on the Future Sustainability of Dutch Higher Education (Veerman *et al*., 2010) concluded that if the Netherlands wants to achieve its high ambitions of being a leading knowledge-intensive economy, the quality and diversity in HE should be stimulated and accommodated through additional investments. In other words, the Netherlands has to better use its talents and resources. The committee concluded that too many students drop out of HE or switch to other programmes after one or two years. Many students are disappointed or unsatisfied with their programme, its level or the expectations raised. Therefore, new policy developments are aiming at getting students "to the right study place faster." The recommendations to enhance quality and stimulate diversity through the profiling of institutions and programmes were welcomed by stakeholders in the system: the associations of universities and UAS (VSNU and HBO raad), student unions, employers' organisations and the ministry.

7.14 In 2011, the advice was followed up by a long-awaited strategy document from the ministry: Quality through Diversity (OCW, 2011). One of the major instruments for achieving the envisaged profiling of institutions and programmes was the implementation of performance agreements. Guided by the independent Review Committee Hoger Onderwijs,[4] all HEIs had to sign a performance agreement with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in November 2012. Based on these agreements and the performance of the institutions, universities and UAS can lose 7 per cent of their teaching budget: 5 per cent based on a fixed set of indicators related to quality and study success and 2 per cent based on so-called "profile-indicators". The fixed indicators include:

- Student dropout rate after one year.
- The proportion of students that switch/change study programmes after 1 year.
- The percentage of bachelor's students graduating in the nominal duration plus 1 year.

[4] http://www.rcho.nl//asp/invado.asp?t=show&var=793&fontsize=11.

- Excellence: the student evaluation scores in the National Student Survey (NSE); or the number of students in excellence programmes.
- The number of in-class contact hours.
- The proportion of teachers with a “University Teaching Qualification”. In recent years a voluntary process towards designing didactical courses for university teachers has led to the official introduction of the “University Teacher Qualification”. In most universities this has become obligatory for all entering teachers and those who work as a teacher for a limited number of years.
- The proportion of overhead costs.

7.15 Even though parts of the performance agreements were contested by many HEIs and their associations, all institutions signed a contract in November 2012. Most of them set relatively ambitious – but still feasible – targets on many of the issues. These are all individual targets, based on the individual situation and scores on the indicators as well as their ambitions. The performance targets are set for 2015 and will be evaluated in 2016. However, the progress towards the targets will be monitored by the Review Committee on an annual basis with a midterm review in 2014. It appears that the performance agreements have become very important internal steering objectives for universities. This means that improving study progress and completion – including emphasis on sending underperforming students away as soon as possible – have become institutional priorities. Institutions now pay much more attention to data about study progress and completion and they have accelerated the full implementation of the BSA, the “Hard Cut” and the University Teacher Qualification.

8| Student financing: tuition fees and financial support

Student financing

8.1 Student financing in most countries is an important public policy instrument to influence student choice. Student financing concerns various elements. Students may have to pay tuition and other fees on the one hand and can be financially supported on the other, either by grants and loans (direct support), by indirect support through their parents (family allowances and tax deductions), or by support in kind, such as subsidised public transport, health care, student accommodation and student restaurants (*Mensa*). In the Netherlands, student financing primarily includes tuition fees and direct support to students.

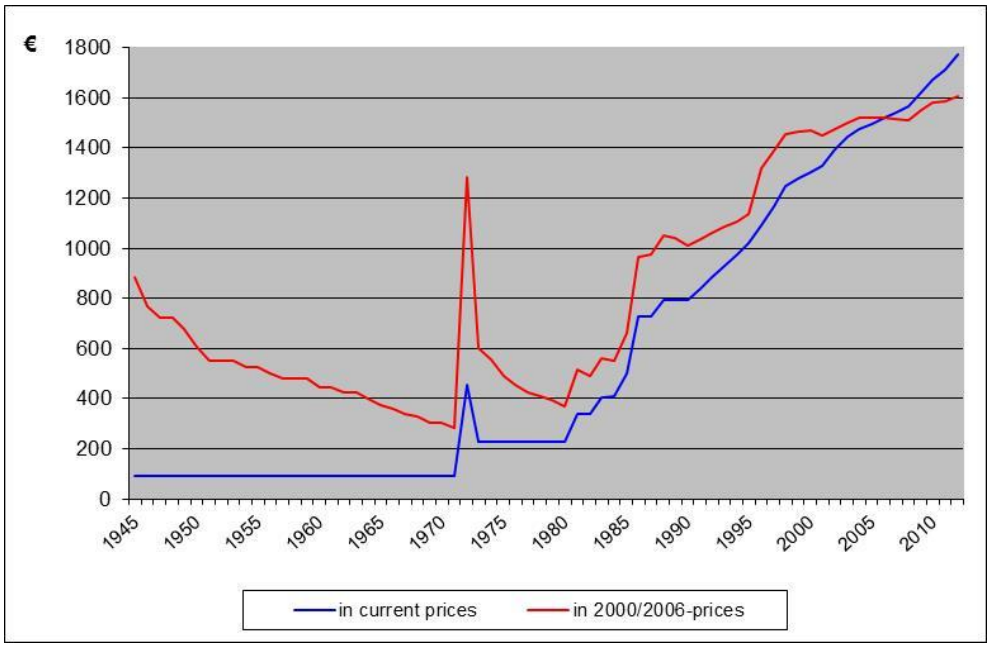
Tuition fees

8.2 Since 1945 students in publicly funded HE have had to pay a standard tuition fee, regardless of the costs related to different study programs. The government annually sets the tuition rate. During the 1980s university students paid slightly higher fees than students in the UAS sector, but in the early 1990s this was equalized. Students make their tuition payments directly to the HEIs, which have full autonomy over this revenue stream. Tuition fees make up about 17 per cent of total revenues in UAS institutions and 6 per cent in the university sector – but about 15 per cent of the overall university teaching budget. Figure 8.1 overleaf shows the changes in the level of tuition fees in the Netherlands since 1945.

8.3 The real value of the fees declined in the 1945–1971 period. In that period students had to pay NLG 200 (€91) per academic year in nominal terms. After an initial increase to NLG 1000 (€454) in 1972/73, the level was set at NLG 500 (€227) between 1974 and 1980. Since then, tuition levels have gradually increased up to almost €1445 in 2003/04. Figure 7 shows that the increases in the level of fees often exceeded the rate of inflation, particularly in the period since 1986. As a result, a larger share of the costs of HE has gradually shifted to students and their families. This means that the Dutch government did not use the opportunity to reduce or abolish tuition fees to expand access to HE. Over the years, this has been a continuous issue of public debate, with the government sometimes proposing to increase tuition fees, student unions and some political parties arguing to abolish or reduce tuition fees. Proponents of fees argue that tuition fees constitute a “fair” private contribution to the costs of HE, which brings the individual students considerable future rewards (monetary as well as non-monetary). But the opponents of fees argue that these harm access, particularly for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This has led to many heated political debates on how to finance the continuously growing HE system. As a good Dutch tradition, such debates generally end in compromises that include moderate tuition increases accompanied by full compensation for lower-income students through means-tested grants and loans. This explains the steady incremental tuition fee path

since the 1980s (as shown in Figure 8.1) as well as the development in the system of student support.

Figure 8.1: Changes in tuition fees (€, in current and real prices)



8.4 The major discussions on tuition fees in 2002/03 related to the issue of differential tuition fees. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture took up the discussion for a number of reasons: to allow institutions to charge higher contributions in return for enhanced quality programmes, and to make particular subjects like science, engineering and teacher training more attractive. However, in the first case opponents feared that this would harm access for poor students, and in the second case it is questioned whether abandoning the equity principle, not to mention the public costs involved, can be justified by the expected number of extra students attracted to the desired programmes.

The current situation

8.5 Students in HE pay tuition fees to the institution. As long as they are under 30 years old on the date when the academic year begins, they are charged the statutory rate for tuition fees. The annual statutory tuition fees for all full-time courses during 2012/13 were €1,771. These fees apply to all Dutch and EU full-time students who study for the nominal duration (plus 1 year) of a degree programme. The level of the statutory fees is fixed by law and is adjusted every year in line with the family spending index. During a bachelor's or master's degree course, a student is entitled to study subjects taught on a different course or do a second course, at any HEI, as long as they have not yet obtained their degree. The institution may not charge extra fees on top of the statutory fees already paid for the initial bachelor's or master's degree course.

Higher fees for non-regular students

8.6 If a student follows a part-time programme or does not meet the nationality or age criterion, the institution may charge fees of its own. This means that non-EU students, part-time students and students over 30 years old have to pay fees at a separate rate, the level of which is set by the institution itself and can therefore vary from one institution to another. Fees may vary according to the institution, course or group of students and are somewhere between €5,000 and €10,000 per year. Fees below the statutory rate may only be charged for degrees taught jointly with a foreign HEI. Non-statutory fees are applicable to all full-time, part-time and dual courses in HE.

Additional fees for regular students that exceed time limits

8.7 From the 1st of September 2012, students who exceed the nominal duration of a study programme by more than 1 year would have to pay a penalty of €3000 extra per additional year studied (*Langstudeerdersboete*). For these students the institutions would receive less public funding accordingly. Though many students really tried to (and did) complete their studies "on time" many students also failed to do so. From the start, this led to large numbers of students complaining that the institutions had made mistakes leading to study delays. All kinds of compensation arrangements needed to be negotiated and organised. Heavy political pressure led to the withdrawal of the *Langstudeerdersboete* from the 1st of January 2013. The envisaged public "budget cut" will now be organised by transforming the basic grants given to all full-time students into loans, as will be discussed in the next section.

Student financial support

8.8 The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science guarantees the accessibility of HE and the government is responsible for financial support for students. The Student Finance Act applies to all students in HE (see the Eurypedia legislation website).[5]

History

8.9 Since 1945, successive Dutch governments have gradually developed a system of student support, though with a change of focus over the following six decades (De Regt, 1993). In the early days the major drive was to open up opportunities for small numbers of talented low-income students. Until the mid-1980s, even during the period of massification of HE in the 1970s, student support remained limited to small bursary and loan programs. Financial support consisted mainly of tax benefits and family allowances for students' parents.

8.10 After long debates, in 1986 a new and relatively generous system of student aid was implemented by the Student Finance Act (WSF). This system transformed all indirect support like tax benefits and family allowances into direct financial support to students themselves. The system established a compromise between students' access and financial independence, system transparency and simplicity, and affordability for the

[5] https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Netherlands:Legislation.

government (Hupe en Van Solm, 1998). The major characteristics of the system that is still largely in place are reflected in the following basic elements:

- A basic grant (*basisbeurs*) for all full-time students, varying between students who live with their parents and those who do not.
- A means-tested supplementary grant for a limited number (about 30 per cent) of students based on parental income.
- Loans that can be taken up on a voluntary basis, carrying a below-market interest rate.
- Parental contributions or students' own income. The parental contributions are strongly interrelated with the (parental) means-tested supplementary grants and loans.
- Finally, students can earn a certain amount per annum before they start losing any of their grant entitlements.

8.11 All components together add up to a given amount that students are expected to need for study and living costs according to annual estimations of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences. From this perspective, no (full-time) students should face any financial barriers to their entrance into HE. Over the years, the budget available to students through the student financing system, including the expected parental contributions, gradually became too limited for the increasing spending patterns of students. Particularly with the introduction of PCs and cell phones, monthly expenditure went up. In 2007 this was partially repaired by offering the amount of tuition fees as additional loans. However, it is not known whether the student financing budget is really too little for students, because many students do not take up the (full) loans. Currently only 50 per cent of students take up a loan; the remainder would rather undertake part-time employment.

Changes in the student financing mechanism

8.12 On the basis of demographic developments, the government expected a decline in the number of students after 1986 and thus believed that a relatively generous system for students would be financially sustainable. But the opposite happened and, partly as a result, a large number of additional changes have taken place since then (Vossenteyn, 2002, 2005 and 2008):

- Tuition fees were increased in real terms.
- Basic grants were reduced several times due to growing numbers of students and limited public budgets.
- Supplementary grants were increased to compensate for tuition fee increases, inflation, and reductions in the basic grants. This is to guarantee access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (about 30 per cent, based on a means test).
- The duration of grants was reduced in two successive steps (1991 and 1996) to the nominal duration of courses (4-6 years).
- Student loans gained in importance. As with supplementary grants, student loans also covered reductions in the basic grant, increases in tuition fees and inflation.

- In 1991, the government started to charge interest on student loans. Until then no interest was charged and most students borrowed (80 per cent). But many of them used the loans to put it in a savings account and received the interest themselves. Following the introduction of interest rates the loan take-up rate immediately decreased to 20 per cent.
- Since 1995, students have been permitted to replace the (assumed) parental contributions with student loans if parents do not contribute.
- Performance requirements were imposed. Since 1993 students have had to meet performance requirements in order to remain eligible for grants. Under the so-called 'progress-related grant' (*Tempobeurs*) students had to pass 25 per cent of the annual study credits otherwise their grants would be converted into interest-bearing loans (Hupe and Van Solm, 1998). In 1996, the progress requirements were intensified through the 'performance-related grant' (*Prestatiebeurs*). Since then, all grants have been awarded initially as loans and only if students pass 50 per cent of the exams in the first-year and complete their degree within the nominal duration of the programme plus 2 years (6 or 7 years in total), their initial loans will be converted into a grant.
- In 2000, the time-limit to complete a degree was relaxed to 10 years for all programmes, particularly to allow students to be involved in extra-curricular activities like student activism and part-time work (Ministerie van OCenW, 1999).
- In 2007, the student support system was expanded with an additional loan facility through which students could also borrow their tuition fees (*collegegeldkrediet*). This implied that basic grants, supplementary grants and the voluntary loans no longer were assumed to also cover tuition costs. In order to compensate for years of falling real value of student support – particularly compared to increasing spending patterns of students – all other support was kept at the same level. This meant the tuition credit was a real top-up.
- In 2007, all student financial support was made portable for study abroad in most countries in the world as long as the foreign programme met Dutch quality standards. This meant that students could use student financial support for 'degree mobility' – for example, to complete a bachelor's or master's programme abroad – in addition to the long-standing opportunities to do so for 'credit mobility' for example, to complete one or a few courses at a foreign institution in the framework of the study programme of the home institution, e.g. for an Erasmus stay abroad.

Impact on access and participation

8.13 Due to the developments noted above the emphasis on parental contributions and students' own resources has gradually increased. In addition, students' expenditure has gone up, exceeding the standard budget available through student support. Therefore one could expect that all these developments negatively affected the financial position of students, which in turn would lead to problems of access to HE. Of course potential access problems were popular topics for public and political debates. However, participation in HE has continuously increased, both in absolute numbers and in terms of transition ratios and participation ratios. Furthermore, the proportion of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (based on parental income and

educational attainment) has remained relatively stable (Vossensteyn, 2005). Only the proportion of ethnic minorities has increased, as indicated in Chapter 4. An interesting period was 1996, when the performance-related grant was introduced. This turned all grants into initial loans and thus meant a financial risk for students. The major reaction was that more students with a pre-university qualification entered into UAS programmes, as this made them feel more secure about being able to complete their degree. Some other students postponed their choice for a year. But after one or two years, all access patterns returned to the previous norms (Vossensteyn, 2005). Throughout the years, many students in the surveys of the Student Monitor indicated that they were debt averse. However, in practice growing numbers of students take up loans and accumulate higher debt (CBS, 2013). Another reaction has been that students throughout the years have increased their involvement in part-time paid jobs, often to avoid taking up loans.

8.14 Most of the changes implicitly meant budgetary reductions and were aimed at encouraging students to pursue more efficient study patterns. In this context, one can observe that the average duration of studies for university students who graduate has fallen from about 6.5 years before 1996 to around 6.0 years afterwards. This may be partly due to the introduction of the performance-related grant in 1996.

8.15 Furthermore, the focus of the support policies has shifted: from opening up opportunities for lower income groups until the mid-1980s, followed by creating a basic income provision for all students in 1986, after which the system reverted once again to supporting underprivileged students. The relatively generous support system in 1986 and the following few years boosted access and participation in HE; however, this effect was never proven causally because too many contextual factors may have also had an impact. The government expected a decline in student numbers due to the demographic decline, but increasing numbers chose educational pathways to HE and increasing proportions of qualifying students also made the transition. They were not hindered by restrictions on the number of student places.

The current student financing system

8.16 Student financing is organised by DUO on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Information on the Dutch student financing system is presented on the DUO website.[6] Students enrolled in accredited or recognised HE programmes and institutions and who are under 30 years can apply for student financial support, even if they study abroad in accredited programmes. The application procedure runs through an online system and is based on the personal identity number of the individual student. If all requirements are met, the student will automatically receive a basic grant and a public transport card. Students need to separately indicate whether they want to use the student loans facilities and the means-tested supplementary grant. If they apply for the latter, they have to upload data about their parents' and/or partner's income.

[6] http://duo.nl/International_visitors/student_grant/student_grant.asp.

8.17 Under the current system, financial assistance consists of an allowance towards expenses such as living costs, books and study materials, tuition fees and travel. Student financial assistance includes a basic grant, a supplementary grant and an interest-bearing loan. The basic grant and supplementary grant are initially paid out in the form of a loan. If the student graduates within 10 years, the loan is converted into a non-repayable grant. Therefore these grant parts are called performance-related grants. Students receive performance-related grants for the nominal duration of their study programme and may take up a loan until 36 months after the nominal duration of their programme. Grants are intended as a means of keeping HE broadly accessible and are paid monthly. The various student support elements will be discussed in more detail below.

8.18 The basic grant is a universal grant for all full-time students who start studying before the age of 30. These are not means tested (i.e., they are received regardless of parental income). However, students living away from their parents receive a different amount than students living at their parents' house (€266.23 and €95.61 per month respectively in 2012). In addition, all students can take up a voluntary interest-bearing loan up to the maximum of €283.86 per month as well as a special tuition fee loan (*collegegeldkrediet*) of €147.58 per month. All students eligible for financial aid are entitled to a public transport pass (a personalised smart card), giving unrestricted free travel on public transport throughout the Netherlands either during working days or during the weekend.

8.19 The supplementary grant is means tested which implies that only students from lower income groups are entitled to it (around 30 per cent of the student population) with a maximum of €244.60 per month. The amount of supplementary grants depends on the level of their parents' income, which students have to disclose to DUO if they apply for these supplementary grants. The DUO website provides an easy calculator tool which indicates how much a student is likely to receive. This implies that parents are expected to pay the remaining share. If parents are not willing to contribute, the student may take out this part as a loan as well. When students lose their entitlements to grants if they exceed the nominal duration of studies, they can take all support in the form of loans for a maximum period of 36 months.

8.20 For students who started courses after 1st September 2010 the supplementary grant is not performance-related for the first 5 months of the programme and thus never has to be repaid. Students with children and/or a partner may qualify for a single parent allowance or an allowance for their partner.

8.21 Students are allowed to earn a gross income of €13,362.53 (2012) from employment without their grants being affected. However, if their income exceeds this amount, they will be sent a claim by DUO. Students can prevent such a claim from DUO by not applying for financial support that year.

8.22 In principle, all student debt must be repaid, including tuition fee loans, voluntary loans and potential debt as a consequence of not meeting the performance requirements. All amounts accumulate interest from the moment students take out the loan. The interest rate is the rate the Dutch government pays at the National Bank plus a small administrative surcharge. This results normally in a very low rate (in 2012 only 0.6 per

cent; in the previous decade on average around 3.5 per cent). After graduation, graduates have a "grace period" of 2 years in which they do not need to make any repayments. After that, repayment starts for a maximum of 15 years. After 15 years, any remaining debt will be cancelled. Debt is repaid normally according to a mortgage-style repayment schedule with fixed monthly instalments. DUO calculates the monthly repayment instalments, based on outstanding debt, projected interest and the 15-year repayment period. The minimum monthly amount is €45. If a graduate has a low-income or is unemployed, they can request to reduce the repayment amount accordingly, even to zero. Such a means test has to be applied for on an annual basis. Students can always make additional voluntary repayments, but when they do they have to announce this through the electronic system.

8.23 The number of borrowers and the actual average student debt have increased substantially in recent years. Average total debt was about €8,000 in 2007, €12,000 in 2010 and €15,000 in 2012. A €15,000 student debt implies a repayment amount of about €100 per month over 15 years. If one considers that HE graduates in their first jobs earn €300 to €500 (net) per month more than if they had not had a HE, this should not be problematic in terms of access. Nevertheless, in public debates, student unions and some strong political parties only stress the "costs" of studying. International research has shown that the Netherlands is rather exceptional with about 97 per cent of all outstanding debt being repaid (Shen and Ziderman, 2008). This high debt-recovery rate is due to relatively moderate student debt, graduates' success in the labour market, lack of public subsidies on interest and an efficient debt-collector mechanism in case of default.

Eligibility for study abroad/portability

8.24 From 1st September 2007, students from a member state of the European Economic Area studying in the Netherlands and following an accredited course and meeting the other requirements laid down in the Student Finance Act 2000 have been eligible for tuition fee loans of up to the amount of the annual tuition fees.

Towards a system of "social loans"

8.25 Introducing a new student financing mechanism for all master's students from 1st September 2012 was discussed. These "social loans" implied that master's students would have to borrow all financial support which would have to be repaid after graduation as a proportion of their income: an "income-contingent loan". These so-called "social loans" have however been put on hold due to the fall of the cabinet in spring 2012.

8.26 Due to the abolishment of the tuition penalty for students who study longer than the nominal duration plus 1 year (*Langstudeerdersboete*), discussion of the social loans facility has been put in a different perspective. The new minister is currently proposing to Parliament a system which will provide all basic grants as loans with an income-related repayment scheme following the examples of Australia and England. Of course there is a heavy debate about its potential harm to access for students from weaker socio-economic backgrounds. However, most stakeholders, including students, are involved in discussing what criteria need to be met to make the system acceptable.

This probably indicates that the indicated debt aversion is not so strong. However, the real behavioural responses of students from weaker socioeconomic backgrounds remain uncertain. Time will tell.

9| Critical review and conclusions

9.1 Widening educational participation in the Netherlands is approached in a broad sense in this report, covering not only access and enrolment, but also including study success in terms of retention/dropout, study progress and successful completion. The report addresses policies and their (potential) impact, where possible supported with statistics. However, the impact of policy instruments on the behaviour of institutions and students will be heavily influenced by context, political compromises, conflicts with other policy instruments, and the strategic behaviour of actors. The measurement of such effects is often limited by the (non-)availability of data.

9.2 For example, in 1986 the government of the Netherlands wanted to design a student finance system that made students financially independent and that would also stimulate study progress. The idea was that if students are supported relatively generously and have no financial problems, they could devote all their time to their study and thus graduate faster. In practice, students enjoyed a relatively good life and therefore maximised the duration of their student financial support entitlements, which was 6 years for a 4-year study programme in the 1980s (and beyond due to all kinds of possible exceptions). This was not only expensive to the state, but also created an informal acceptance that students are entitled to sufficient levels of support to have a proper standard of living while studying. The objective of securing accessibility was definitely guaranteed. Student numbers went up, against expectations. However, the system became more expensive than budgeted and average duration of studies was not going down. Therefore, a number of successive steps were taken to reduce public spending while at the same time guaranteeing accessibility and affordability and to encourage students to be successful. This made the system more complex – which ran against the objective of transparency – and students gradually felt bad about many of their moral entitlements being taken away, experiencing increasing pressure in terms of financing and performance.

9.3 Without going into details of the various more specific policy measures discussed in the previous chapters, the following critical analysis will provides some more general critical observations and conclusions about widening educational participation in the Netherlands. These will be clustered around the following themes: the structure of the education system; the array of policy instruments used; access and participation trends; study success; the impact of student financing policies; and some general reflections.

The structure of the education system

9.4 The Netherlands has an elaborate but rather complex education system. After primary education, pupils at a relatively early age (12) enter a diversified secondary education system with various tracks. On the one hand this addresses various needs and capacities of youngsters very well. It enables youngsters to specialise and prepare for

the labour market at the early stages of their life. On the other hand, this may lead to lock-in effects that limit young people who still vary a lot in the stages and speeds of personal development, growth and ambitions. Though general education attainment levels in the Netherlands are relatively high, one could imagine that a more general secondary education approach could qualify even larger groups for HE. To overcome some problems of early placing of pupils on various tracks, changes were made to postpone early choices by 1 or 2 years. To better prepare pupils for transition into HE, more attention was put on skills and competencies and less on factual knowledge. For many pupils this was a beneficial development, but for those who require a more structured environment, this may have led to early dropout. Although these reforms have been met with criticism and, regardless of a stable demographic development, the numbers of youngsters qualifying for and transferring into HE have continuously increased.

9.5 With regards to HE, the establishment of the Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) sector in 1984 has led to a binary HE system. The unique characteristic in the Netherlands is that the UAS enrol about two-thirds of all HE students and only one-third of the students are enrolled in traditional research universities. In most countries with a UAS sector they enrol only 25 per cent to 30 per cent of the total student body. After decades of debates on the merits and limitations of this binary divide, the Veerman Committee (2010) reconfirmed the strong role of the UAS sector in relation to Dutch society and the labour market. To further strengthen the role of the UAS sector, Associate Degrees, professional master's programmes and research have been structurally embedded in the UAS activity range. However, the UAS sector will remain the cheaper alternative for preparing large numbers of people for highly qualified jobs. In the perspective of widening participation, having such a relatively large UAS sector has enabled the Netherlands to maintain its policy of open access and admit all applicants with a sufficient entrance qualification in decades of massive expansion of the demand for HE. Statistical data have shown that the increase in student numbers has been the highest in UAS institutions and that the UAS sector particularly offers opportunities for underrepresented groups, like students from ethnic minorities and weaker socio-economic backgrounds. As such, the direct costs of a predominantly publicly funded HE system were kept within limits while stimulating access. Allowing and partially funding professional master's programmes and the establishment of Associate Degrees in the UAS sector contributed to that trend and further opened opportunities to students.

9.6 For a long time, the UAS sector was not supposed to perform any research. Of course this has been a major source of tension between the UAS and university sectors. In order to enhance the quality of teaching and relations with the labour market, since 2000 practice-oriented research has gradually been allowed and stimulated in UAS. This also is regarded as a means to keep education in the UAS sector of high quality and appealing to new generations to enter HE.

9.7 Partially due to differences in pathways to HE – the 6-year pre-university track versus the 5-year general secondary track preparing for entrance into the UAS sector – university bachelor's programmes take 3 years whereas UAS bachelor's programmes take 4 years of study. Though there are differences in the orientation of the

programmes – more academic versus more professional – Dutch bachelor's degrees in general are well accepted abroad (Westerheijden *et al*., 2008).

The array of policy instruments used

9.8 In Chapters 5 to 8 a large number of policy instruments and developments are described that in one way or another were meant to influence access, participation, retention and graduation in HE. Only national-level initiatives have been discussed; more specific institutional instruments have not been addressed. With regards to access and participation, the main policy lines and instruments were formed by open access, information provision, student financing and structural reforms. With regard to study success (retention/dropout, study progress and degree completion) the major instruments are matching/selection, performance agreements and process organisation. A number of instruments have a generic character addressing (potential) new entrants and students in general; other instruments are targeted at specific groups of students or institutions.

9.9 To oversee the range of policy measures regarding access, participation and study success, it appears that the Netherlands uses a rather holistic approach. Access, participation and study success are being stimulated from a number of different perspectives. Secondary education reforms tried to enhance academic preparation. Information provision initiatives help (prospective) students to make their choices. Open access without selection guarantees all qualified people the opportunity to enter HE, regardless of socio-economic status or any other characteristics. The public funding formula stimulates institutions to attract many students and to have them graduate. Only a limited number of study programmes, like medicine, dentistry and architecture, have limited capacity and use entrance selection.

9.10 Various process-related policies aim to improve retention and study success. The recent trend towards soft selection seeks to integrate matching activities that help prospective students and institutions to more critically reflect on their study choices. This attitude towards self-reflection and acting as a critical consumer is further stimulated by pulling forward the final date before prospective students need to apply to their chosen study programme. First experiences show that students more actively use the information offered for making the right choice. Therefore, the government has also set up its own organisation and websites to offer relevant information to prospective and current students, their parents and secondary education student counsellors about opportunities in HE and the quality offered by different study programmes and institutions.

9.11 Soft selection is also envisaged to create a stronger commitment between students, study programmes and institutions. This should lead to higher retention rates and less dropout. The results will only become visible in the future. Other measures are envisaged to stimulate early dropout, like the Binding Study Advice (BSA) and the "Hard Cut". While these have been implemented only recently, it appears that students more consciously act towards meeting the requirements. Statistics on transition rates into successive years of study were never collected, which means no hard data are available on the impact of the BSA. With regards to the "Hard Cut" it can be seen that

the most recent cohorts of students complete their bachelor's degree sooner than previous cohorts.

9.12 Some policies target institutions with particular problems, like the large city initiative to stimulate quality and study success at the five large UAS institutions in the four biggest cities in the Netherlands that enrol particularly large proportions of ethnic minority students who need additional attention. Though some good practice examples have been established, stimulating real improvement in study success proves to be very difficult if one does not use a very structured and integrated approach to support, monitor and guide weaker students. Performance agreements made with all HE institutions in 2012 will help institutions to stay on track and focused. Most national policy initiatives are subject to evaluation about 5 years after implementation. However, it appears that institutions have started to voluntarily implement further policies that support study success (retention, dropout, completion and study progress) and to collect additional data on these issues. One interesting example is the widespread implementation of the University Teachers Qualification which will definitely improve the (long neglected) didactical skills of university teachers in order to make university education more attractive to students. Whether that also leads to the envisaged reduced dropout and increased study progress remains to be seen, though it is expected.

9.13 However, all policies and instruments may also have their weak sides in terms of access, participation and maybe even the quality of education. For example, students and institutions may show strategic behaviour that mitigates the intended behavioural effects. If institutions are funded on the basis of graduate numbers, they may operate strategically in order to increase output or even reduce quality. In addition, many instruments may not have the desired effects. For example, the information campaigns to attract more (female) students into engineering had hardly any impact. Even though most instruments are evaluated, it is often difficult to assign a causal relationship. Finally, it may be difficult to monitor progress due to non-availability of data, often caused by legal limitations on the collection or linkage of certain data. Examples of this are data on family income and parental education.

Access and participation trends

9.14 In Chapter 4 a number of statistics on access, participation and study success are presented. However, data are still limited. Particularly, structural databases have little data on the socio-economic background of students. Only ethnicity is structurally embedded in the statistics, but not parental education or family income. This is surprising as access is regarded as such an important topic. These data are hard to retrieve and sometimes not allowed to be collected or combined. The Student Monitor includes such data, but does not present it in a structural time series. This leads to more incidental data on students by parental education and/or family income.

9.15 The data available show that, like in other HE systems, in the Netherlands the proportion of underrepresented groups in UAS is higher than in universities. In the past decades, the proportion of students from non-native backgrounds has steadily increased. This can be regarded as a big success in terms of improving access to HE.

This tendency is very likely the result of a longstanding policy approach to better integrate ethnic minorities in the primary and secondary education systems. Early intervention programmes to improve language skills at an early age may have been particularly helpful. However, causal relationships cannot be proven. In addition, the data show that students more often use the secondary pathways to enter HE, like HAVO, MBO and other entrance routes. This is also an indication of successful widening participation strategies. With regard to socio-economic status, available data show a more stable pattern.

9.16 Female participation has increased, with more women being enrolled nowadays than men. Against the idea of lifelong learning, Dutch students are getting younger and less often study part-time. Particularly the decrease in part-time students and adult learners is regarded as a negative aspect with relation to widening participation in the Netherlands.

Study success and transition into the labour market

9.17 With regards to study success, the number of graduates has continuously increased, not only in absolute numbers, but also as a proportion of each entrance cohort that successfully completes a degree. Over time, the duration of studies has also slightly decreased. This was strongest among ethnic minority groups. This also implies that dropout rates slightly declined. Furthermore, the average time to dropout slightly decreased. All in all, the system has become more successful in terms of productivity and efficiency. However, if one compares the achievements to the costs and efforts, one can ask how effective all initiatives concerning study success have been, or whether it is possible to substantially improve study success in any way. As a result of the Veerman Committee (2010) further efforts will be undertaken in order to even better use the talents within Dutch society. The economic benefits of a highly educated labour force are regarded as a key factor to make the Netherlands a top-five knowledge intensive society which, due to high labour costs, can only be competitive by being highly innovative.

9.18 Alumni surveys show that HE graduates are rather successful in the labour market. Most graduates find a job relatively rapidly, often relatively closely related to their field of study and with decent pay rates. Also many alumni are relatively satisfied with their HE experiences. Unfortunately, there are no statistics available about the potential relationship between labour market success and the background of students in terms of ethnicity, entrance qualification or even grade-point-average or international student mobility. Such data collection is gradually making its way onto the policy agenda, but it has not been collected so far. Nevertheless, the Dutch labour market is still rather unselective in the sense that employers do not often ask for the study results of prospective employees. Generally, having the right degree is most important, followed by potential extracurricular activities like international mobility, membership of boards, part-time jobs and so on. Grades or the specific university are less often used as selection criteria.

The impact of student financing policies

9.19 Monetary incentives are often regarded to be relatively effective in influencing the behaviour of students. The Dutch experiences with tuition fees and student financial support indicate that tuition fees do not harm access. Steadily growing tuition rates have never hindered students' participation in HE, even though tuition fees have always remained a political issue and are perceived to limit access for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The same goes for student loans. Even though students, particularly those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, in several editions of the Student Monitor indicated that they dislike student loans, they do borrow and do not let that be a preventing factor for enrolment in HE. It may affect the choice of the type of programme or institution to enrol in, but to a very limited extent.

9.20 Establishing a relatively generous student financial support system in the mid-1980s has facilitated further growth in participation when stabilisation was expected on the basis of demographic developments. Even though many changes to the financial support system increased the private costs to individual students, participation has continuously increased. Only certain systemic shocks, like the transition to performance requirements, may have a negative impact on accessibility in the short run. However, new generations of students quickly get used to the new situation and rapidly returned to the old participation patterns. However, most changes in Dutch student financing have been gradual with small annual increases in tuition fees and loans and reductions of grants. In the current debate about the transition from basic grants to "social loans" students and political parties heavily criticise the intentions of the minister, but they do accept the idea of more loan financing as long as students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds are properly compensated.

Appendix 1 | References

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Appendix 2 | List of abbreviations

CBS	Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (Statistics Netherlands)
HAVO	Hoger Algemeen Vormend Onderwijs (General Upper Secondary Education)
HBO	Hoger Beroepsonderwijs (Universities of Applied Sciences)
HBO-raad	Vereniging Hogescholen (Association of Universities of Applied Sciences)
HE	Higher education
HEI	Higher education institution
LOI	Leidse Onderwijsinstellingen
MBO	Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs (Senior Secondary Vocational Education)
NTI	Nederlands Trainings Instituut
OU	Open University
VSNU	Vereniging van Nederlandse Universiteiten (Universities' Association)
VWO	Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (Pre-University Education)
UAS	Universities of Applied Sciences