State Models, Policy Networks, and Higher Education Policy. Policy Change and Stability in Dutch and English Higher Education

HENNO C. THEISENS/JÜRGEN ENDERS

Introduction

In many Western European countries, the 1980s and 1990s provided interesting times for higher education. It was a period of change in different areas both inside and outside the higher education sector. All developed countries have experienced large growth in terms of student numbers in their higher education systems. This implied a second development that the higher education budgets grew as well; spending on higher education in absolute terms has grown throughout the 1980s and 1990s in all OECD countries (Scott 1995, Boezerooy 1999, Kogan/Hanney 2000). These two major developments, which, by themselves, made higher education a more salient topic on the political agenda, have collided with a third and a fourth development. The third, is a change in economic paradigms, that has led governments to realise that large state budgets and high taxation may cause economic problems (Scharpf 1997, Hall 1992, 1993). This realisation has led to a policy of cutbacks on state budgets, including the relative budgets available for higher education. The fourth is the growing perception that higher education is important to realise economic objectives. These four developments have meant that higher education systems in most OECD countries faced the challenge of delivering more students, under increasing pressure to do so efficiently, in terms of costs, and effectively, in terms of quality and economic relevance (Williams 1997, Huisman/Theisens 2001, Enders 2002).

Different countries have, however, developed different policies in order to deal with these challenges facing their higher education systems. Our paper argues that overall characterisations of policy responses and approaches in higher education across countries have a tendency to neglect or to play down such national differences. Although it is possible to analyse general patterns in higher education policy – such as attempts to create a new mix between state and market (or quasi-market) regulation on the one hand and institutional and academic self-regulation on the other hand – such patterns may well overlay important national varieties.

More specifically, our paper argues that the political systems and policy networks operating in different countries help to explain why countries act to a different extent and in different ways to similar problems. The paper is based on a major study analysing policy change in Dutch and English higher education from 1980 until 1995 (Theisens 2004). Building on the work of Lijphart (1984, 1999), we start with his distinction between majoritarian and consensus democracies as ideal types of the formal institutions of the state. One of the weaknesses of this approach is its sole focus on these institutions neglecting to a large extent the importance of characteristics of the policy sector at stake. The higher education sector with its two-tier structure of traditional universities and the (non-university) higher professional education sector provides in both countries an interesting opportunity to study the importance of such differences. They open up the opportunity to study interactions between the formal institutions of the state, the characteristics of the policy sector and the higher education institutions. The concept of policy networks is central here because we assume that state models and types of higher education institutions shape the policy networks that affect in turn policy change. As regards change and stability in policies we looked in both countries more in-depth on quality assurance systems, funding systems and policies to strengthen the links between industry and higher education. In other words two questions are central in this paper:

- Does the interaction between different state models and types of higher education institutions give rise to different policy networks? And:
- Can differences in the extent of policy change be explained through differences in the policy networks in which such policies are generated?

State Models, Policy Networks and Policy Change: Concepts and Expectations

State Models and Policy Networks

The point of departure of this paper is the work of Lijphart (1984, 1999) whose analysis rests on the idea that all democracies deal with a fundamental problem. Democratic states are, literally, states in which 'the people rule' from the Greek 'demos kratein'. The problem is that 'the people' is not a unified actor, but a population made out of potentially millions of people all with differing interests and perceptions. It should come as no surprise therefore that 'the people' often do not agree on political issues. The question then becomes: "In what way should a democratic decision-making process be organised to come to an agreement if opinions clash?" According to Lijphart there are two fundamentally different approaches. Either the majority of the people decides or as many people as possible are included in the process. The majoritarian model is a model in which government power is highly centralised, based on clear majority in Parliament and institutionally (at least) autonomous from interest groups in society; interest groups that are engaged in open competition amongst each other (i.e. pluralistic). The consensus model is characterised by a multiparty system, by coalition governments and by intensive, institutionalised interactions between government and society (i.e. corporatistic).

Further on, the argument is made that policy change must also be understood in the context of a policy network (Atkinson/Coleman 1992, Kickert 1997, Klijn/Koppenjan 2000, Marsh 1998, Rhodes 1997). The basic assumption of the policy network, as a framework for studying the policy process, is "that policy is made in complex interaction processes between a large number of actors which takes place within networks of independent actors" (Klijn/Koppenjan 2000: 139). The actors involved in the policy process are mutually dependent because they need each other's resources. In the case of higher education policy making for example, higher education institutions are dependent on state resources in terms of funding and regulation. At the same time, the state depends on higher education institutions for information and their capacity to implement policies. Therefore, in policy networks co-operation is a necessity to achieve satisfying outcomes. This does not imply that there are no conflicts within these networks, there is a diversity of interests and objectives that at times may clash.

Notwithstanding the complex dynamics of policy making in policy networks, the concept of a network also implies a certain structure that

underlies the interactions between actors (Rhodes 1997). In our case, a policy network is not only shaped by the state model of the state in which the policy network is located, but also by the types of higher education institutions (universities and institutions of higher professional education) that are operating in the network. Summing up the differences between universities and institutions of higher professional education three organisational differences emerge. First, universities are more autonomous vis-à-vis their environment. Second, inside universities, academics have more autonomy than teachers have in institutions of higher professional education. Third, in universities de-central chairs remain very powerful, leading to a more de-centralised organisational structure. In the context of this paper the question is what these differences mean for the policy process and the implementation of policies inside universities and institutions for higher professional education.

The classification of networks in this study is thus based on the core concepts of the state model and types of higher education institutions – the idea being that the interaction between these two concepts leads to four different types of policy networks. Each of these networks has its own characteristics leading to particular dynamics within the network.

Each of the four networks consists of three layers, or put alternatively, three interlocking networks. First, the 'state network', within which the cabinet, the Parliament and the ministry are defined as actors for the purpose of this study. Secondly, connecting state and higher education institutions, the 'sector network' that consists of buffer organisations, interest and lobby groups. This network can, depending on the state model be pluralistic or corporatistic. Third, the 'higher education institution network' within the higher education institutions: consisting of an executive board and a number of basic units. These three networks are interconnected. Actors within the state and higher education institutions can have various relationships with actors outside these entities. In order to reduce the number of relationships that are examined, the state and higher education institutions are examined as though they were single actors, within the second network. This leads to a two by two matrix with four cells that contain the essence of each network. The content of the matrix is elaborated on below.

Table 1: Four different policy networks

	Majoritarian	**Consensus**
University	*State network* • Central position of cabinet *Sector network* • Pluralistic • Autonomous position of higher education institutions *HEI network* • Autonomous position of de-centralised units of the higher education institutions	*State network* • Central position of Parliament and intermediary organisations *Sector network* • Corporatistic • Autonomous position of higher education institutions *HEI network* • Autonomous position of de-centralised units of the higher education institutions
Higher Professional Education	*State network* • Central position of cabinet *Sector Network* • Corporatistic • State dominant over higher education institutions *HEI network* • Centralised higher education institutions	*State network* • Central position of Parliament and intermediary organisations *Sector network* • Corporatistic • State dominant over higher education institutions *HEI network* • Centralised higher education institutions

Note: This table presents a short overview of the types of indicators for different policy networks, these indicators, for matters of presentation, are formulated in absolute terms. They are in fact, of course, relative.

The Influence of Policy Networks on Policy Change

Having conceptualised these four policy networks the question is what their effects on policy change are.

In the *university majoritarian policy network*, policy change depends critically on the role the state wishes to play. If the state decides to speedily produce policies, it can do so for mainly two reasons. The first reason is that the (pluralistic) policy network is loosely connected and the state can isolate itself from the (often time consuming) interference of intermediate organisations. The second reason is that the cabinet plays a central role in the network and is able to push through the policy changes it prefers. The autonomous position of the organisations in the policy network may, however, deter the state from interfering with the higher education institutions through policies too much. In the *higher*

professional education-majoritarian policy network the same holds true, but there is less of a deterring effect of the autonomous position of higher education institutions in the policy sector.

In the *university-consensus policy network* the state is involved in a corporatistic and therefore tightly connected policy network in which intermediary organisations play a central role. Policy change is always negotiated between many players in the networks. This limits the speed with which policy changes can be created. This is especially true in the situation of the university policy network in which the autonomous position of the universities requires the agreement of the universities with policy changes. In the *higher professional education-consensus policy network*, the same holds true as above, but the dominant position of the state vis-à-vis the institutions of higher professional education means that the state can forge policy changes easier. Summarising these expectations, results in the following hypotheses:

- In consensus systems more policy changes are expected in the professional higher education sector than in the university sector.
- In majoritarian systems more policy changes are expected in the professional higher education sector than in the university sector.
- In university sectors more policy changes are expected in majoritarian systems than in consensus systems.
- In higher professional education sectors more policy changes are expected in majoritarian systems than in consensus systems.

Research Design

The method employed in this study to test the hypotheses is a qualitative comparison of two countries that are comparable in many ways but differ as much as possible in their state models. As case studies, England and the Netherlands are selected, for the reason that in Lijphart's work the UK clearly is an example of the majoritarian model of democracy whereas the Netherlands is a typical example of the consensus model.[1] In both countries three types of actors were targeted at the level of the

1 Although Lijphart looked at the entire UK, in this study England was looked at. The most important reason is that as part of the devolution process in the UK, in each constituting Kingdom (England, Scotland, Whales and Northern Ireland) funding committees were created that quickly developed different policies. Therefore, including the UK as a whole in the study would be like performing a comparative study within a comparative study.

policy sector: the State (minister/department and Parliament), the funding organisations and the higher education interest groups. Much higher education literature is available on these subjects. Therefore an important part of the reconstruction of policy networks and policy change in this study takes the form of a secondary analysis of the existing literature. In addition, key policy documents from the English and Dutch ministries of education have been analysed.[2]

The interest of this study is with changes that came to the forefront in the early-1980s when massification and the necessity of budget cuts began to have a combined impact on higher education systems. The central thesis in this study is that in both countries this combined impact led to changes in policy as well as in the structure and behaviour of higher education institutions. The early-1980s are therefore the starting point of this research project.

To choose where, in time, this study should stop was slightly more difficult. The choice was made to study changes until 1995. The reason to end in 1995 is pragmatic. In the Netherlands in 1997 a major new law came into being that changed the administrative structure of universities. While earlier changes inside these institutions were at leas partly a result of choices within the institution, the introduction of this new law meant that in all universities an externally imposed new structure was implemented. To prevent this caesura in developments from interfering with the rest of the data, the data collection is stopped at that point.

The time period chosen, from 1980 to 1995, opens a 'window of observation' for the kind of changes this study focuses upon within a time frame that allows for these changes to emerge, develop and be implemented. The time period also poses no great problem in terms of comparability between the Netherlands and England. The policy changes in both countries were the result of similar economic problems and similar political ideologies. Broad similarities remained the case in both countries for most of the period 1980 to 1995.

Politically in both countries governments with a right wing agenda (the conservatives with Thatcher as PM and the CDA with Lubbers as PM) dominated most of the period. Economically the situation of England and the Netherlands was also comparable. Both economies were confronted with similar economical problems in the early-1980s (see chapter one) and both sought solutions in similar directions. Both countries reversed the downward economic trend in the early-1990s.

2 The original study included a study of actual changes inside universities next to policy changes, the analysis of changes inside universities were mostly based on interviews with key actors.

Measuring Policy Change

Clearly of particular importance for this study is the measuring of policy change. Unfortunately, it can be deduced from the number of rivalling methods that policy change is difficult to conceptualise let alone to measure. Most of the current conceptualisations (see, for example, Pressman/Wildavsky 1973, Lindblom 1959, 1979, Cerych/Sabatier 1986, Rhodes 1997, Hall 1992) distinguish between changes on different levels. These levels range from fundamental change in the underlying values and worldviews of a policy, to small changes in the policy instruments that do not change the objectives of a policy.

This study focuses on four areas of policy change using a fairly pragmatic approach to policy change. First, the shift from funding inputs and processes to funding based on outputs. Second, the way in which quality assurance systems operate and the extent to which they externally drive higher education institution's performance. Third, the autonomy of institutions to decide on which study programmes they wish to offer. Finally, the introduction of policies intended to stimulate higher education institutions to take into account societal demands, in their research and teaching. For each of these areas a number of indicators have been created like "Have finance systems moved from earmarked funding to lump-sum funding?" or "Have there been policies with the intention to strengthen the relationship between higher education institutions and actors in the environment of these institutions?"

The more changes in these policy-areas (as identified by the indicators) by the governments of England and the Netherlands (i.e. the greater the number of policy initiatives and the further reaching these policies), the more policy change in a system.

Outcomes of the Study

Policy Networks

The study found that four networks could be distinguished that to a large extent corresponded with the theoretical expectations. At the same time, the networks turned out to be far from static but are themselves due to policy change.

The *policy network of the university sector in England* in the early eighties was characterised by a central position of the cabinet within the state (Downing 1993). In between the state and the institutions, the University Grants Committee (UGC) acted as buffer, with the representing organisation for universities, the Committee of Vice Chancellors and

organisation for universities, the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principles (CVCP) closely linked to it. The position of the UGC seriously limited the Cabinet's influence on the policy process and universities were very autonomous, both financially and in terms of content of teaching and research. Internally universities were very de-centralised, with a lot of autonomy for departments. By 1995, the shape of this network had changed dramatically. The replacement of the UGC by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) meant a much stronger grip of the state over the universities. As the position of the CVCP was linked to that of the UGC, it also weakened. In its place, lobby groups, like the Russell group, are lobbying for universities with comparable profiles and interests (Salter/Tapper 1994, Williams 1997, Kogan/Hanney 2000).

The *policy network of the university sector in the Netherlands* in the 1980s was confronted with a much less centralised state than the English university sector. Policies are the result of interaction between ministry, parliament and intermediary groups. In these interactions the Academic Council, as a legally institutionalised organisation with representatives of university and state, played an important role. Universities were very autonomous in terms of the content of teaching and research, but in terms of finance they were more restricted as they received, de facto, earmarked budgets from the state. Internally universities were very decentralised. Up to 1995, several changes have taken place in this network. The Academic Council was replaced with the Association of Dutch Universities (VSNU), an organisation that represented the interests of universities, but was not legally institutionalised like the Academic Council. In terms of finance, universities got more independence from the state, as money was shifted towards a lump sum funding system (Huisman 2003, Huisman/Theisens 2001, Toonen 2002).

The *policy network of the higher professional education sector in England* in the early 1980s was characterised by a domination of the polytechnics by local authorities. Nationally, the cabinet played an important role through the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) and the National Advisory Board (NAB). The polytechnics were only represented by the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics (CDP), a rather weak interest group. Unlike the universities, the institutions of higher professional education were tightly controlled by the local authorities in financial terms, though in terms of the content of teaching they were autonomous. The Polytechnics in this period were small and centralised. Up to 1995, many things changed in this policy network. After 1988, polytechnics were removed from the local authorities and in 1992 placed under the HEFCE. At the same time they were rela-

belled universities, which meant that nominally they had the same position as universities, gaining in terms of financial autonomy as well as the right to validate their own courses. It also meant that they were represented by the same CVCP at the national level. These new universities were much larger than the Polytechnics due to mergers and massification and they remained very centralised compared to universities (Kogan/Hanney 2000, Pratt 1997).

The policy network of the higher professional education sector in the Netherlands was at the beginning of the 1980s characterised by policies that, at state level, were the result of interaction between ministry, parliament and intermediary groups. The latter group, most importantly the HBO council, was still rather weak in the early eighties. The HBOs (the institutions had very little financial autonomy; their bills and wages were directly paid for by the state; their autonomy lay in the content of teaching. The HBOs were very small, centralised schools. In the period leading up to 1995, several important developments took place. One was that the HBO council was growing in strength as a consequence of mergers in the sector (Goedegebuure 1992). A second development was the greater financial autonomy of the HBOs. Like the universities, their funding switched to lump sum funding. Just like their English counterparts, the HBOs grew massively while remaining more centralised than universities at the same time (Deetman 1984).

Policy Change

The results of our study on policy change in higher education in England and the Netherlands are summarised in the table on the next page. The table shows an interesting array of developments.

First, from a *funding*-standpoint both countries in both sectors moved in the same direction, giving universities and higher professional education institutions, (but especially the latter) much more freedom over the way in which they spent their budgets. This was an important development as it freed the higher education institutions to act as free standing institutions and not as a de-concentrated part of the state bureaucracy. On the one hand, in the Netherlands developments in terms of funding in both sectors went further than in the UK; they provide higher education institutions with a mixture of input and output funding giving higher education institutions incentives to work efficiently. On the other hand the attempts in England to create a managed market and to make universities compete for scarce resources were an alternative interpretation of what a market in higher education could mean (Groot/van de Poel 1993, Jongbloed 1999, Williams 1997).

Second, in terms of *quality control* the situation radically changed, especially for the universities and especially in England. Quality control in universities in England, just like their Dutch counterparts, was based on an informal system of peer review within the higher education institution and especially within the discipline. By 1995, universities in England were confronted with a state controlled quality assessment system that scored teaching and made the results public (Kogan/Hanney 2000). In the Netherlands the informal system was formalised and a meta-evaluation by the Inspection was added (OC&W 1985). In the same period Dutch HBOs moved from a situation of relatively tight control by Government and the Inspection to a system comparable to that of the universities in 1995 (OC&W 1985). Polytechnics in England moved from regular institutional reviews to the same situation as all English universities when they were granted university status (Pratt 1997).

Third, in terms of the rules and regulations for setting up *new study programmes*, the situation changed much more for higher professional education institutions than for universities. In the Netherlands HBOs are now given the possibility to develop new programmes by themselves, granted, those programmes need to be validated by the Minister after an advice of the ACO. In England the polytechnics are now free to validate their own study programmes although like English universities they work with external review committees. Also many of the procedures that were established by the CNAA are still operating because institutions stick to them (Pratt 1997). In English universities the situation with respect to programme validation has remained more or less the same in the sense that universities were and still are in charge of programme validation. However, the procedures followed in 1995 are much more formalised, in response to demands from the quality assessment committee of HEFCE (Kogan/Hanney 2000). In the Netherlands too, the situation for universities has changed little. The most important shift was the abolishment of the Academic Council and the establishment of the ACO. While the Academic Council consisted mainly of representatives from the universities, the ACO is a much more independent committee. This has meant on the one hand that universities were less involved in the validation procedure but on the other hand that the validation procedure is became less 'political' with an independent committee judging applications on more or less objective criteria (Huisman/Jenniskens 1994, Huisman/Theisens 2001).

Finally on the issue of *higher education-industry relationships* there is an enormous difference between England and the Netherlands. In England universities and polytechnics have been confronted with many policy initiatives that sought to strengthen this relationship. Over the

years there have been a number of government programmes that use monetary incentives to encourage universities to become more socially relevant. The structure of these programmes is quite similar. Funds are made available on a competitive basis for specific aims. The 'Enterprise in Higher Education' programme (EHE) was, for example, initiated by the Department of Employment with the objective of changing the teaching priorities of higher education institutions. Universities and polytechnics could bid for funding in collaboration with industrial and commercial partners. The teaching initiatives had to provide students with 'enterprise skills'. In the Netherlands such policies did not emerge (Sommerlad 1993, Whiteley 1995).

Table 2: Summary of Policy Change in England and the Netherlands

a) Universities

	Netherlands	**England**
Funding policies		
1980	• State • Lump-sum, but *de facto* earmarked • Based on input	• University Grants Committee • Lump-sum • Increasing central planning linked to funding
1995	• State • Lump-sum • Based on mixture of input and output	• HEFCE (quango) • Lump-sum • Based on input • Managed market (failed)
Quality systems		
1980	• Academics • Informal • Peer review	• Academics • Informal • Peer review
1995	• VSNU • Formalised • Peer review	• HEFCE (quality assurance committee) (quango) • Formal • External review
Regulation with regard to new study programmes		
1980	• Minister after advice Academic and Education Councils • Quality	• Internal validation • Quality
1995	• ACO (quango) • Macro efficiency	• Internal validation • Quality
Policies to stimulate higher education-industry relationships		
1980	• None	• None
1995	• None	• State • Several policies

b) Institutions of Higher Professional Education

	Netherlands	England
Funding policies		
1980	• State • Direct pay of personnel and bills, small subsidies for extra activities • Based on input	• Local Authority • Direct pay of personnel and bills, small subsidies for extra activities • Based on input
1995	• State • Lump-sum • Based on mixture of input and output	• HEFCE (quango) • Lump-sum • Based on input • Managed market (succeeded)
Quality systems		
1980	• Inspection • Formal • External review	• CNAA (quango) • Formal • Institutional review
1995	• HBO Council • Formalised • Peer review	• HEFCE (quality assurance committee) (quango) • Formal • External review
Regulation with regard to new study programmes		
1980	• Minister • Quality	• CNAA (quango) • Quality
1995	• ACO (quango) • Macro efficiency	• Internal validation • Quality
Policies to stimulate higher education-industry relationships		
1980	• None	• None
1995	• None	• State • Several policies

The Influence of Policy Networks on Policy Change

Reviewing a period of fifteen years with a focus on different aspects of higher education policy reveals the following evidence for the four hypotheses that we formulated above on the influence of policy networks on policy change:

- In consensus systems more policy changes are expected in the higher professional education sector than in the university sector.

When looking at funding policies in the Netherlands more dramatic policy-shifts can be observed in the higher professional education policy-network compared to the university network. These changes, however, had more to do with the different positions from which both types of higher education institutions departed in the early-1980s than with the level of centralisation in the policy-network. The enormous growth in

the higher professional education sector demanded a different funding model.

In terms of quality assurance again a mixed picture emerges. The most dramatic changes here have been in the university sector. Institutions of higher professional education in the Netherlands were under firm control by the state or state related bodies. This strict control was slightly relaxed as these institutions developed into more free standing higher education institutions. The universities, however, saw their traditional autonomy with respect to quality and its definitions infringed upon through state interference. Finally, with regard to the introduction of new study programmes, higher professional education institutions during the 1980s and early-1990s received the same degree-awarding powers as universities.

- In majoritarian systems more policy changes are expected in the higher professional education sector than in the university sector.

Clearly, in England, polytechnics have witnessed more dramatic changes than universities in terms of their place in the higher education policy sector and their organisational structure and size. However, focussing on the three areas singled out above there is not so much difference in terms of policies. For quality assurance, the changes for universities were more dramatic as they were confronted by a government with a centrally organised quality assessment system, much against their will. Polytechnics by contrast had always been assessed by the CNAA. For funding and degree awarding powers changes for polytechnics have been more dramatic, but they have been in the direction of bringing polytechnics closer to a much desired university status. For the polytechnics this has meant much more autonomy, most importantly because they were freed from local authority interference. In contrast, universities had to deal with some reductions in their autonomy as a consequence of the creation of HEFCE and with the abolishment of the UGC they lost their main buffer organisation against the state.

- In university sectors more policy changes are expected in majoritarian systems than in consensus systems.

The university sector in England has indeed witnessed more change than the same sector in the Netherlands. Though the changes in funding models in the Netherlands has been shifted more (towards a mix of output and input funding) this is surpassed by the radical budget cuts of the early-1980s, the abolishment of the UGC and its replacement with

HEFCE. The quality assessment system introduced in England again meant more change than the Dutch case, where a quality assurance system was introduced. In terms of the regulations for the establishment of new study programmes more change was established in the Netherlands, where the ACO replaced the function of the Academic Council, in England a test on macro efficiency was never introduced. Finally in terms of university-industry relationships the state introduced several programmes to make higher education more open to the needs of industry in England, while no such programmes were developed in the Netherlands.

- In higher professional education sectors more policy changes are expected in majoritarian systems than in consensus systems.

This hypothesis too, is supported by the available evidence. The higher professional education sector in both countries saw dramatic changes during the 1980s and early-1990s but the policy changes were greater in England. The introduction of a managed market, of a quality assessment system and the policies to strengthen the ties between higher professional education institutions in England are all examples of policy changes that are unequalled in the Netherlands.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study started by breaking down the policy changes from the early-1980s to the mid-1990s in different areas of higher education policy: changing allocation models, the introduction of quality assurance systems, the regulation regarding new study programmes and the stimulation of external relationships of higher education institutions. When reviewing these changes, we are confronted with national and sectoral variety rather than with policy convergence. That is, for individual countries, historical background, state models, and policy networks are factors that act against regulatory convergence of higher education systems. This is not to deny commonalities across countries and sectors. But in moving away from broader or more abstract classifications of shifts in governance, we are able to point, both, to considerable variations between and within countries as well as to more mixed or nested modes of co-ordination in higher education.

Short Term versus Long Term Policy Change

This study found mixed results with regard to policy changes in the majority and consensus state models, for both the university and the higher professional education sector. In the *short term*, the majority state-model has given the English government the opportunity to change policies quickly relative to their Dutch counterparts. In the short term the English system, seems capable of sudden and dramatic changes in its policies. A host of examples can be given, including the 17 % budget cuts for the entire university sector; the abolishment of UGC and installation of HEFCE; the introduction of a 'managed market'; the inclusion of polytechnics in the university system; the creation of Quality Assessment Committees (see Salter/Tapper 1994 or Hanney/Kogan 2000). These are all examples of quickly created policies with which higher education institutions were confronted without much consultation. In the Dutch system there were no developments comparable to these swift changes in England (see Huisman 2003 or Toonen 2002).

The *longer term* perspective paints a different picture. University funding, for example, shows that the pace of policy change in consensus systems may be slow, but that the outcomes over longer periods can be substantial. The move towards output-oriented funding was made slowly but steadily in the Netherlands, this is not the case in England. This slow but steady change is even more surprising if one considers the fact that there have been coalitions of various parties during this period with different ministers of education. The remarkable stability in the direction of policy change in Dutch policy making during this period suggest that once a course is set out and all actors in the policy sector are more or less committed and aware of the underlying ideas of the course, it might result in stability.

Centralisation versus De-Centralisation

Some of the policy changes found in this study suggest an underlying dimension, namely a much stronger drive towards centralisation in England and a drive towards decentralisation in the Netherlands (interestingly both often formulated in the vocabulary of the market). All in all, English government has increased state control over the universities, whereas in the Netherlands government withdraw to some extent from tight control and institutional autonomy has been increased.

The introduction of quality assurance systems has, for example, been much more radical in England than in the Netherlands. When looking at the university sector both countries moved from informal peer review to

nationally organised systems. But there was one important difference: in England a change was made to a system of state control, whereas in the Netherlands the state restricted itself to meta-evaluation (through the Inspectorate) of a system that was controlled by the academics within the disciplines. This move towards centralisation in the area of quality assessment in England was not self-evident. The universities were developing their own system of quality assurance more or less similar to such developments in the Dutch system. English government simply overturned these developments and introduced a system of its own.

In the case of higher education funding, the Dutch government gave more autonomy in financial terms to the universities. Conversely for English universities, the creation of HEFCE, a council directly linked to the state meant less autonomy for the institutions compared to an earlier situation in which the buffer organisation UGC allocated funds.

This trend of growing state control over higher education in England can also be found in the types of policies developed to strengthen the relationships between the universities and industry. Projects like the EHE programme stipulated what universities had to do in order to receive substantial sums of funding. In the tight financial situation of many universities after the 1983 budget cuts, this again meant considerable influence of the government over the universities. The Dutch government developed no such policies.

Differences in Points of Departure

Many of the policy changes meant a much greater degree of freedom for the higher professional education institutions in both countries. For universities they often had other connotations. Universities were confronted with a state that wanted to shift (in the Netherlands) or increase (in England) its grip. The important point being that policy change is not absolute but related to the positions of the actors that are the subjects and/or objects of change. In this case, similar changes have meant different things to the university and the higher professional education sector. This is because both sectors had a very different point of departure in the early-1980s.

In the Dutch HBO sector, we observe the development of higher professional education institutions into free standing organisations, more or less on a par with traditional universities. Developments in the policy network meant more autonomy for institutions, which was welcomed by them. Developments in the university network meant a different type of steering in which a shift in state steering and more autonomy were interwoven and only partially welcomed by the institutions.

In England too polytechnics saw more dramatic changes than universities in terms of their place in the higher education policy sector and their organisational structure and size. Like in the Dutch case they have been in the direction of bringing them closer to a (much wanted) university status. By contrast, English universities have had to deal with a reduction in their autonomy. The creation of HEFCE and the abolishment of the UGC meant for example that universities lost their main buffer organisation against the state.

Causality: On Policy Networks and Policy Change

One of the underlying ideas of this study has been to combine the strong points of concepts of state models (their conceptual rigorousness and their possibilities for comparative research) with the strong points of concepts of policy networks (their usefulness as a tool in precisely describing power and other relationships both inside and outside the state). The analysis of the networks in this study has demonstrated that the state model has a definite impact on the shape of the networks. The study has also shown that networks and their different shapes are significant when it comes to the creation and implementation of policy. This suggests that a combination of both concepts is a useful way of studying the policy process.

At the same time, a good point can be made that there is interaction between policy change and network change and that the change of policy networks may form part and parcel of a process towards policy change. Policy change in both sectors in England and the corresponding government role in these sectors led, for example, to a more centralised network. The state was much more involved in these networks, not because of the traditional shape of these networks, but because it saw a necessity to do so. In contrast, Dutch government withdraw to some extent from tight control while higher education institutions gained in importance. A result of these interventions was that the networks in both countries took their new shape.

This draws attention to possible shifts of what may be called governance by default to governance by design as far as policy networks are concerned. Governance by default would refer to a situation in which policy networks are the outcome of traditional constellations and possibly change due to the (unintended) consequences of the choice of policy instruments available at a certain point in time. Networks, in this case, are not a policy objective in their own right. In comparison, governance by design would refer to a situation in which policy networks and, more particularly, changes in their design, become a policy objective in and of

itself. Questions about how and by whom policies are made thus become a matter of more deliberate and reflexive policy choices that may or may not be linked to specific substantive policy goals.

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