

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.



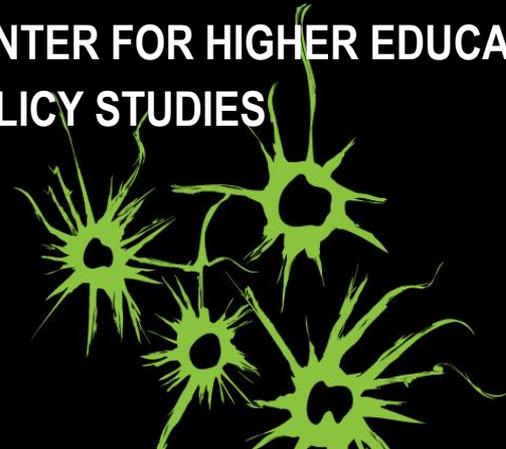
DIFFUSION EFFECTS OF EXCELLENCE EDUCATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

EUA 2019 EUROPEAN LEARNING & TEACHING FORUM

RENZE KOLSTER

DON F. WESTERHEIJDEN

CENTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
POLICY STUDIES





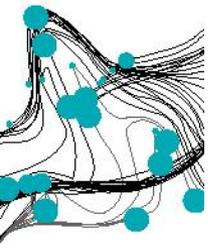
INTRODUCTION

- Research questions
- Excellence education in the Netherlands
- Conceptualisation
- Methodological notes
- Insights into effects
- Conclusion
- Discussion and questions

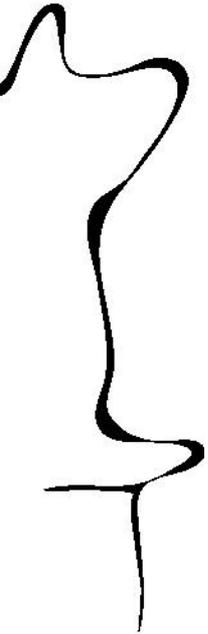


RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the **diffusional effects** of excellence education on higher education institutions and on regular study programmes?
- Which policy instruments do higher education institutions use to diffuse innovations originating in excellence education to the organisation and to regular study programmes?



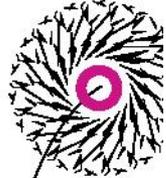
EXCELLENCE EDUCATION IN THE NETHERLANDS



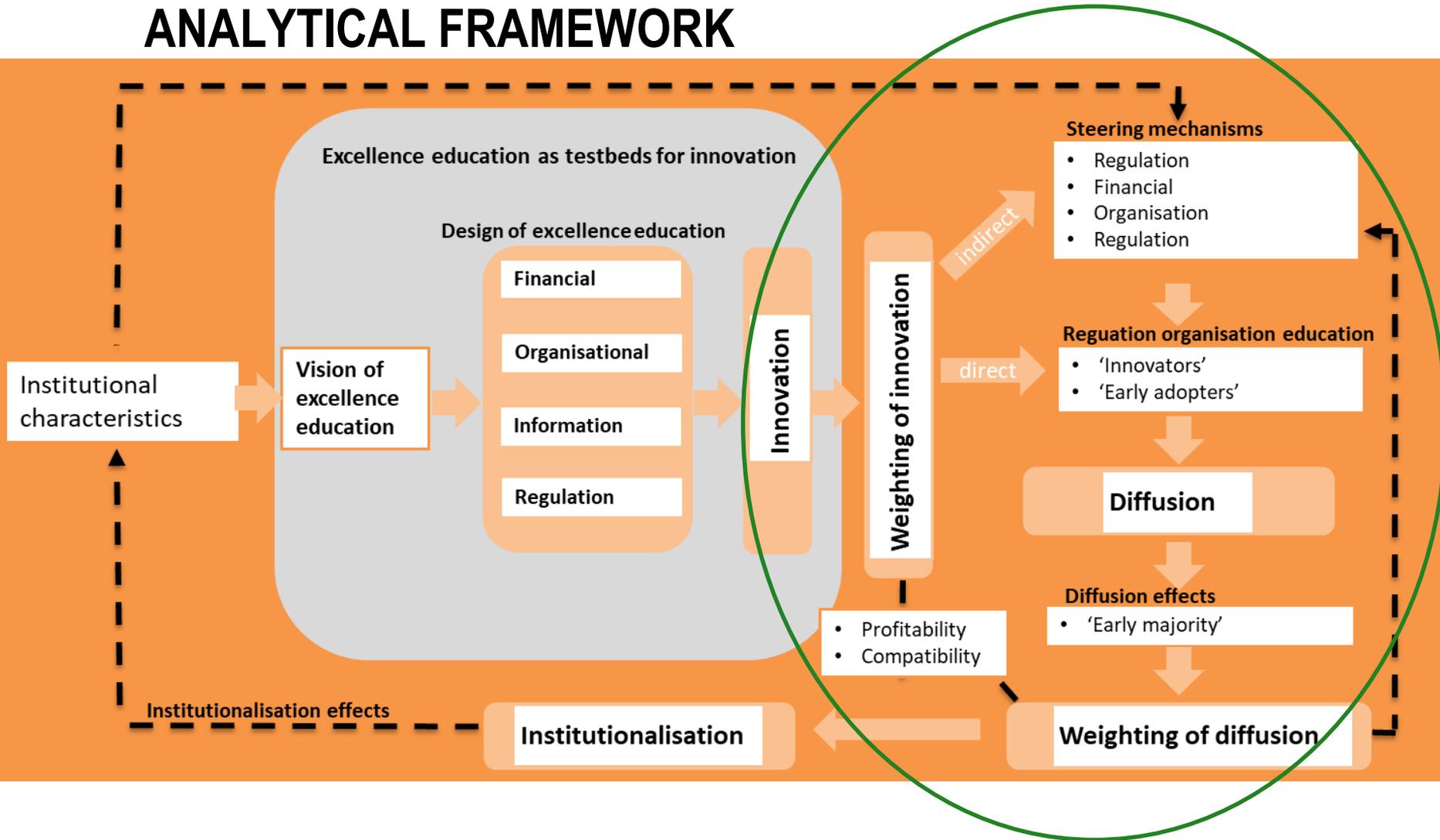
- Additional (extra-curricular) education (30 EC)
 - Motivated and high performing students
 - Extra challenge
 - Laboratory / testbed for teaching / educational innovations / experiments
 - Impact on regular study programmes
- Subsidy programme by government (2008 to 2014, 60 million euro)
- Step away from the egalitarian nature of Dutch higher education
- Inspired by US, also emerging in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Germany (Wolfensberger, 2015)
- All research universities, most UAS

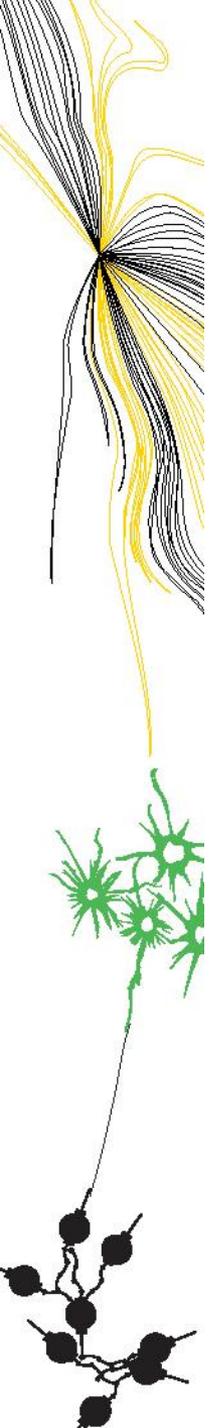


CONCEPTUALISATION

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- Organisational learning: Organisations learn when an organisational component develops knowledge that is potentially useful for the entire organisation (Huber, 1991)
 - Excellence as dedicated community of practice for innovation: a testbed
 - Innovation: “new or significantly improved product, process, organisational method or an organisation itself developed by or having a significant impact on the activities of a higher education institutions and/or other higher education stakeholders” (Brennan, et al., 2014, p. 4).
 - Conceptualisation: innovation cycle with the testbed of excellence education in the center.
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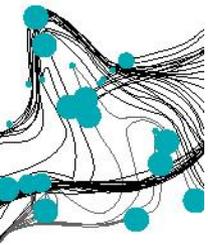
ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK



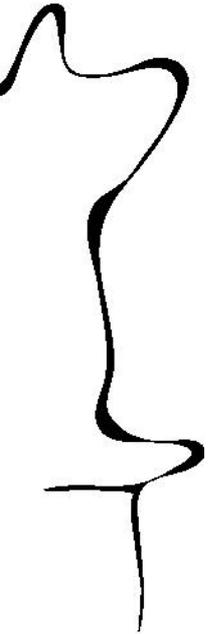


METHODOLOGY

- 5 case studies: 3 research universities, 2 universities of applied sciences
 - Document analysis
 - Digital survey respondents
 - In-depth semi structured interviews
- Four topics covered in research design:
 - Functioning of excellence education as a testbed
 - Factors that support or hinder the diffusion process
 - Steering instruments
 - **Effects on education, institution and externally**



FUNCTIONING OF EXCELLENCE EDUCATION AS A TESTBED



- University Colleges prime example of testbed
- Honours programmes in policy documents given the function as testbeds
3 of the 5 institutions
- Even if not in policy, respondents largely indicate honours programmes function as testbed for innovations
- Important:
 - Free to design and deliver education as they see fit (room for experimentation)
 - Excellence education has few regulations or management oversight
 - Education provided by enthusiastic teachers (innovators, early adopters)



EXAMPLES OF DIFFUSED INNOVATIONS

Uni 1	Uni 2	Uni 3	UAS 1
Student driven learning	Student driven learning	Student driven learning	Student driven learning
Project-based learning	Active attitude honours students diffused	Internship	Multidisciplinary education and cooperation
Activating educational practices	Quality assurance system	ICT-supported interaction	Active attitude honours students diffused
Reflection on knowledge and social themes	Matching tool for group assignments	Activating educational practices (through 'Honours Lab')	Exam forms: students choose assessment criteria
Team-based learning	Research based learning		
Flipped classroom	Matching of students to study programmes		
Community and self-defined codes of conduct	Academic advising		
Personal development plans	Leadership training students		
Personal pursuit projects	Professional Skills development		



EFFECTS ON EDUCATION

- Didactics
 - Research based learning → regular thesis more academic
- Examination
 - Formative vs. summative experiments
 - Students to set assessment criteria
- Classroom
 - Honours students in regular education → level of the discussion
 - Too early to talk about change in culture



EFFECTS ON THE INSTITUTION

- Vision of education and educational model
 - Socially-relevant themes, modulization, research-based learning
- Institutional culture
 - Open to innovations, room for students to excel, less egalitarian, attention to quality
- Community
 - Honours students as community, active in institution (e.g. hackathons)
 - Community amongst honours teachers
- Teachers
 - Satisfaction, challenging, inspirational, diversification job
 - Honours content or examples in regular education.



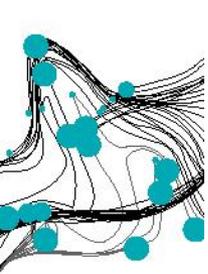
EXTERNAL EFFECTS

- Visibility:
 - University able to show clear examples of excellence
 - Output honours students receives attention (media)
- Reputation
 - Companies provide assignments, partner universities receive honours students
 - Honours students on labour market
- Attracting students
 - Excellence education used in marketing
 - Some students (partially) choose a HEI for the excellence option

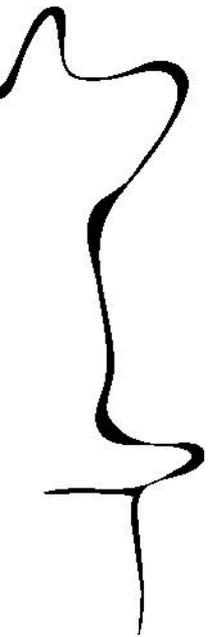


NEGATIVE EFFECTS

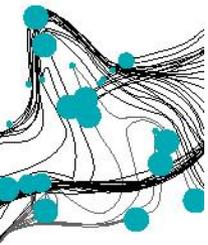
- Costs and small population
 - Substantial budget allocated to limited amount of high performing students
- Dichotomy in student population
 - Honours vs. non-honours students
- Workload
 - Extra task teachers, less time for regular education
 - Contributing to by students felt pressure to perform
- Benefits?
 - Limited tangible benefits; limited insights



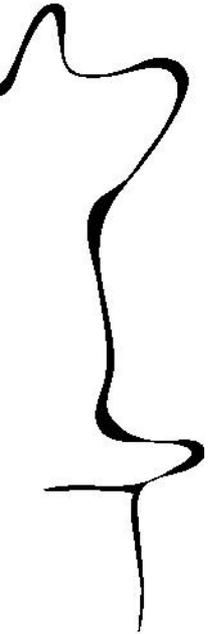
CONCLUSION



- Signs of effect, but overall limited diffusion
 - Weighing: profitability and compatibility
- Direct diffusion is most common path
 - Role of teachers and students
 - Important: critical mass to diffuse innovations
- Knowledge not made explicit through steering instruments
 - Key appears to be institutional recognition of excellence as a testbed for innovation
 - Most important role for organisational measures (e.g. facilitating interaction)
 - Delicate balance top-down vs. bottom-up



DISCUSSION & QUESTION



- Some remarks on context of findings
 - Irrespective of excellence education, universities pay more attention to quality of education (role external / internal quality assurance processes)
 - Egalitarian learning vs. differentiating learning: culture, cost-benefits, labour market effects
- Discussion on the conceptual model:
 - Impulse for rethinking education: dedicated community of practice for innovation, giving teachers freedom to experiment free from regulations
 - A model for education innovation in European universities?



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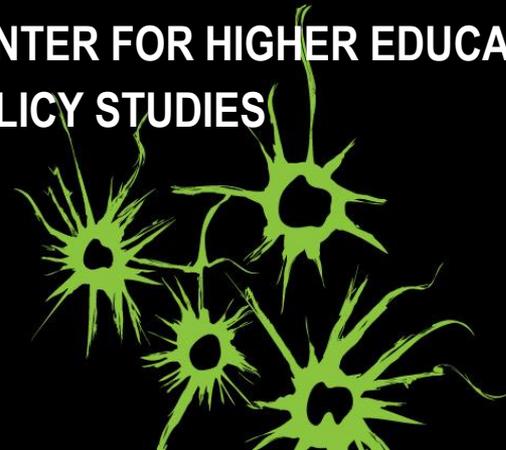
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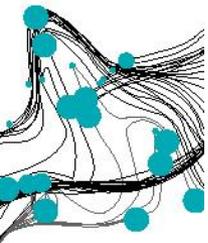
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REFERENCES + FURTHER READING

- Brennan, J., Broek, S., Durazzi, N., Kamphuis, B., Ranga, M., & Ryan, S. (2014). Study on innovation in higher education: final report.
- Huber, G. (1991). Organizational learning: The contributing processes and the literatures. *Organization Science*, 2(1), 88–115.
- Wolfensberger, M.V.C. (2015). Talent Development in European Higher Education: Honors Programs in the Benelux, Nordic and German-Speaking Countries. London: Springer Open.

Further reading:

- Kolster, R., Van Dijk, L., & Jongbloed, B. (2016). Introducing Excellence in Higher Education; Honours Programmes in the Netherlands and Students' Preferences, *Journal of the European Higher Education Area*, (3), 1-22.
- Wolfensberger, M.V.C., van Eijl, P. J., & Pilot, A. (2004). Honours programmes as laboratories of innovation: A perspective from the Netherlands. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 115-142

