

4. MOVING FROM QUANTITATIVE POLICY TOWARD QUALITATIVE VALUES

ANALYSIS

DAG feels that university policy focuses on statistics rather than people. Undemocratic structures of management, consisting of managers that are out of touch with the work they preside over, have worked to create a system of quantitative evaluation. Even national government policy, through the institution of 'performance agreements', has contributed to the ubiquity of this phenomenon. This policy is partially driven by the current model of funding, but is also stems from a much more fundamental issue: a lack of vision concerning academic quality.

The valuation of the work done by a researcher is done by measuring their number of publications in premier scientific journals. This restrictive view is what the university terms 'research output'. This system of evaluation, unfortunately, has little regard for inherent differences between academic disciplines. In natural sciences, journal articles are a good vehicle for publishing academic findings. Using the same criteria for the humanities, however, is unnecessarily restrictive, debilitating many research projects in these fields. Furthermore, the emphasis on 'research output' discourages academics to publish for a wider or a Dutch audience. This narrow quantification of 'research output' hurts both the quality of the research done and, crucially, the mental (and thereby physical) health of university employees. At the same time, its only advantage lies in helping to obtain higher 'university rankings' that are, in truth, rather meaningless. To what benefit does the RUG allow this to continue? Let us get rid of this destructive, discriminating system, rather than subscribe to these inappropriate international institutions!

An obvious consequence of this quantitative framework is that management prefers a student that graduates quickly. Speed is more important than quality. There is decreasing opportunity for academic self-realization both inside and outside the university. DAG holds the opinion that education must be judged by assessment of qualitative criteria, inspiring students to take back their responsibilities and their freedom.

OUR VISION

Academic research must be based on a system of trust and integrity. In addition, it must look to create a long term framework of knowledge that may facilitate further development. We do not know what the questions of tomorrow will be and have to prepare ourselves for those new questions. Education should not primarily aim at the training of employees. Rather, it should strive to institute in its recipients the capacity for critical thought, social contribution, and self-realization. The university is an eminently suitable body to promote this principle and, as such, bears great responsibility. DAG desires to emphasize qualitative norms for research, rather than the quantitative measures that are currently employed. Let us get rid of these measures that restrict researchers and bankrupts university education.