

The Netherlands

Demographics for The Netherlands

Population:	16,407,491 (July 2005 est.)
GDP (by PPP method):	US\$481.1 billion
Currency (inc code):	Euro (EUR)
Language(s):	Dutch (official), Frisian (official)
Internet country code:	.nl

Introduction

Both the secondary and higher education system were transformed recently. The transformation in the secondary education system was inspired by pedagogical ideals of what is often called New Learning. It emphasizes self-regulation, collaborative learning, knowledge creation (instead of knowledge transfer) and the importance of situational and blended learning environments. The higher education system introduced the guidelines of the Bologna Treaty (2002) and adopted the three-cycle degree program. Many of the secondary and higher education institutions are still in the process of implementing these recent changes.

Primary education

Primary education starts at the age of four and lasts eight years (the first year is optional). In the last year pupils are advised as to the type of secondary education they should pursue.

Secondary education

Secondary education starts at the age of 12 and is compulsory until the age of 16. It is subdivided into a general education stream and a vocational education

stream. The latter is subdivided into two levels: pre-vocational (VMBO) and senior vocational education (MBO). Pre-vocational education starts at the age of 12 and consists of four years. After the pre-vocational education students can enter the four-year senior vocational education programs of the MBO (based on job profiles in the public and private sector). At each level of the MBO a student can opt for a practice-based learning trajectory (one day school, four days work) or a school-based trajectory (four days school, one day work). An MBO degree does not allow students to enter the higher education system directly. The vocational education stream is to be transformed in 2006 toward a competency-based qualification structure which relies strongly on problem- and practice-based pedagogues.

The general education stream consists of a five-year and a six-year education program. Pupils are admitted on the basis of a general qualification. The five-year general education program (HAVO, senior general secondary education) prepares pupils for higher professional education. Graduation from the HAVO gives students admission to the institutions of higher professional education (HBO) institutions, but not to the general universities.

The six-year general education program is a preparatory school for university education (VWO). Graduation from the VWO automatically allows the graduate to enter university. To which study depends on the clusters of subjects the students have chosen during their secondary education. The clusters are science and technology, science and health, economics and society and culture and society. These general clusters are meant to prepare and to smooth the transition to the study programs in universities. The cluster economics and society gives admission to the university studies in (business) economics, business administration and management. VWO graduates are also admitted to the institutions of higher professional education. A minority of HAVO-graduates pursues another two years of education at secondary level in order to graduate from VWO, and be admitted to a university study. Graduates of secondary education are normally in the age range of 17 (HAVO graduates) to 19 (VWO graduates).

Higher education

The Dutch higher education system consists of two types of institutions: universities and institutions of HBO. Currently there are more than 50 HBOs with some 360,000 students (in 2005) of whom some 120,000 are in economics and management. There are 14 public ordinary universities, including three technical universities, the agricultural university and the Open University, with a total of 195,000 students, of whom 32,000 are in economics and management. There are a few specialized universities and approved institutes of international education. Among them is one accredited private business university.

The HBO institutions include general and specialized institutions in seven sectors, one of them being economics and management. They aim at offering programs of higher professional education, which prepare students for particular professions. They offer a four-year program consisting of lectures, seminars, projects, independent study, internships and study abroad, delivering a professional Bachelor's degree ("B", for instance, B in English). Thereafter, students can pursue another year of study resulting in a professional Master's degree ("M", for instance, M in Economics). A minority of the graduates switches after Bachelor's graduation to a general university study, where they are normally allowed into the second or third year of the Bachelor's program (in some cases even directly into the Master's program after completing a preparatory program and exam).

The university system in The Netherlands is, after implementation of the Bologna-reform process (since 2002), based on a three-cycle degree program, consisting of Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral programs. The Bachelor's program is mostly a three-year program, resulting in a Bachelor of Science (BSc, for instance, BSc in Business Administration) or Arts (BA, for instance, BA in English) degree. The Master's programs vary between one and two years and deliver the MSc or MA degree. Some universities are still in the process of change to the new (Bologna) system, and still deliver the old one-track four- to five- year combined Bachelor-Master program, resulting in the traditional Dutch degrees *drs*, *mr* and *ir* (depending on the discipline). The third cycle is the Doctoral program, a research program of three to four years, during which a dissertation must be completed based on original and independent research, delivering the highest academic degree, the Doctorate, with the title of Doctor (abbreviated *Dr*). Some universities and disciplines combine a five-year research Master (MPhil) and Doctoral (PhD) track.

All officially recognized programs of universities and institutions of higher professional education have to be admitted and registered in the CROHO, the Central Register of Higher Education Programs. There are two separate registers and accreditation tracks: one for programs of higher professional education and one for programs of university education. To be admitted to the CROHO, the programs have to be accredited by The Netherlands Flanders Accreditation Organization (NVAO). Accreditation by the NVAO is required for all programs eligible for government funding and delivering the legally protected degrees.

Most institutions of higher education operate using a semester or trimester academic calendar. After implementation of the Bologna reform, institutions have adopted the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

Regular study fees for students from the EU of under 30 years old are fixed by law. Fees for students from outside the EU may be higher at the discretion of the university or institution.

Management education

Management education in The Netherlands is provided by a wide range of public and private institutions and organizations. Almost all management education programs that lead to a degree are provided by the recognized and accredited universities and HBO institutions. At the university level, undergraduate and graduate programs in general management and business administration are delivered by eight out of 14 general universities, mostly organized in academic units referred to as business/management schools or faculties of business administration, as well as by the only private university, which is entirely focused on management education. Programs of management of technology or technical management are provided by the three technical universities. Moreover, most of the universities provide programs in business economics by their faculties/schools of economics. Some universities that have no separate business schools/faculties have graduate schools of management, organized at the university level, or as joint ventures between faculties.

On the level of professional higher education some 25 programs are offered, leading to a Bachelor's degree in economics, commerce, business administration and communication. On top of that, the institutions of professional higher education increasingly offer also professional Master's programs, sometimes referred to as MBA. In summary:

- eight universities with Bachelor and Master of Science/Arts degree programs in general management/business administration with some 12,000 students (in a total of 32,000 in economics and management);
- three technical universities with BSc/MSc programs in technical/technology management with some 1,000 students;
- 25 institutions of professional higher education delivering Bachelor's degrees with some 115,000 students.

The number of internationally recognized MBA programs provided by Dutch institutions is limited because Dutch universities have focused on programs at the MSc level. Another reason why the MBA market is not strongly developed is that the MBA degree is not officially recognized and legally protected in The Netherlands, in contrast to the MSc degree. Recently, more universities have entered the MBA market and succeeded in acquiring international accreditations (EQUIS, AACBS, AMBA). The total number of MBA students is still relatively small compared to the MSc students. The MBA programs are very international both in terms of composition of the program and in terms of student body.

Most of the university-based business schools/faculties are also active in degree and non-degree executive education. There is an increasing number of part-time MBA, EMBA and specialized post-experience Master's programs provided by the university business schools/faculties. These programs are

quite international and often also delivered in consortia of international business schools or in partnerships with international companies. Also the institutions of HBOs are becoming more active in this segment of the market. However, there are many more providers of non-degree management and executive education programs in the Dutch market, including associations, consultants and companies themselves sometimes provide in-house training for their employees.

All business Doctoral programs are provided by the university-based business schools/faculties. They are mostly organized in officially recognized and accredited research schools and strongly connected with the ongoing research programs. The Doctoral programs have a strong emphasis on completing a dissertation based on independent and original research, after a period (one to two years) of courses. After the Bologna reform, most schools/faculties have a three- to four-year PhD track after completion of an MSc program, or a five-year combined research Master's and PhD program. Normally in the first year, the Doctoral student selects his/her subject, which is approved by a dissertation committee, finds a coach and initiates his/her research. After completion of the dissertation and approval of the coach, the dissertation is defended before a committee of independent professors (including a minimum of outside guests). Successful defense is awarded with the Doctor degree.

The faculty of the university-based business schools/faculties mostly consists of academics holding a PhD in management/business administration or related academic disciplines, such as economics, sociology, psychology, technical sciences or mathematics. In most cases they have a combined teaching and research assignment, and promotion is heavily dependent on research achievements. To a lesser extent these business schools use the input of practitioners, mostly as guest lecturers, coaches of business projects and mentors. Almost all courses in the Master's programs and a fair amount of courses in the undergraduate programs are taught in English, which makes the programs very accessible to international students. The percentage of international students in the programs is high.

Issues facing management education

The internationalization of business is reinforced by the Bologna harmonization process. Bachelor graduates of one school are in the position to pursue their studies in another school in another European country (so-called vertical mobility). The globalization of management education is accompanied by other major changes in the institutional environment which challenge the school's current strategic, organizational and pedagogical practices:

- The implementation of the Bologna reform process and the increased international competition, both on the student and the faculty market.

This includes the policies toward international partnerships with other academic institutions, necessary to provide for study-abroad facilities for students, and the co-delivery of international programs in consortia to cater for the needs of the MBA students and executive education participants. International network capabilities need to be developed to respond to these challenges. In general the Dutch management education community seems to respond quite well to these challenges. The Dutch government and education sectors have a front-runner position in implementing the Bologna reform process *vis-à-vis* the rest of Europe, and an historically strong international orientation seems to help the education institutions to position themselves in the international arena, also with the help of the internationally oriented business community.

- To compete in the global arena the reputation of the school will become one of the most important intellectual assets. International accreditations, on top of the high-quality national accreditation system, have become minimum requirements on which high reputation will be built. Already quite a few of the university-based business schools/faculties have acquired international accreditation (by EQUIS, AACSB, AMBA) and the others are in the process of doing so.
- The Bologna Treaty paves the way to further internationalization and mobility of the student population. At the organizational level European business schools need to restructure their curricula in order to respond adequately to the influx of students at the Master's level from different European countries. Most of the business schools both at the university and the HBO level are already involved in this process.
- Globalization of management education started a war for academic talent. To meet the challenge of becoming outstanding, reputed business school recruitment and retention policies for academic talent need to be revised and attuned towards servicing the high demand of the academic staff. Adapting the salary structure is one issue. Providing all kinds of administrative and social facilities are very important as well. The fact that the Dutch business schools/faculties have a strong research base (being part of universities) helps offset the salary-disadvantage in attracting and retaining top international staff.
- Most schools are still underutilizing the challenge of e-learning. Recent research shows that the main barrier for the rapid diffusion of e-learning in higher education is lack of attention to invest in the e-learning skills of the academic staff. The technology is there but the teaching staff is missing the knowledge and skills to use e-learning in a beneficial way.

- Like in most of the other European countries, the Dutch academic community has faced continuous budgetary pressures and government funding freezes or even cuts. Yet, in the business education sector these pressures have been countered by the fact that increasingly funding was provided from private sources, like MBA tuition fees, executive education program revenues and contract research contributions. The expansion of the program portfolio from predominantly government funded pre-experience programs into a more balanced portfolio of programs throughout the life-long learning trajectory is giving the institutions a broader revenue base.
- An important challenge for university-based business schools/faculties is how to manage the relationships with the corporate world. Traditionally the relations between universities and the corporate sector are not always systematically developed. It has become clear that in the discipline of business administration/management, especially in the era of life-long learning, well-functioning and trusted network relationships with the corporate world are required. Most of the business schools/faculties in The Netherlands have developed or have started to develop a structure to manage the involvement of the corporate community in their activities. More and more strategic partnerships with the corporate community are emerging.

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