UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Quality assurance in professional higher education institutions

The structure of internal quality assurance systems and the experienced costs

By L.A. Redder

Quality assurance in professional higher education institutions

The structure of internal quality assurance systems and the experienced costs

Name student:	L.A. Redder
Student number:	s0150444
Faculty:	Management and Bestuur
Study programme:	Public Administration (track higher education policies)
Department:	Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS)
Supervisors:	Dr. D.F. Westerheijden and Dr. P.J. Klok
Date:	17 March 2010

Preface

While this preface is the beginning for those reading this report, for me it marks an ending. A year ago I had just an empty paper in front of me. It was very challenging to finish my graduation project at a satisfied level, and it would not be possible without the support of several people. I would like to use this preface to thank them. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisors, Don Westerheijden en Pieter-Jan Klok for their contribution in this study by offering their comments and insights.

I would also to thank my parents, Hennie and Egbert and Berend and Miranda. They have always encouraged me, even when the progress was not that much. Astrid Pascal, thanks a lot for your time and your advice about the English language.

Of course, also a special ‘thank you’ to my sister and my friends for their suggestions when I got stuck. And last, but certainly not least; Teun, thanks for just being there.

Leonie Redder

Summary

Background and research question
Globalisation and the knowledge economy are the two main factors which led to an increased interest in internationalisation of higher education (Goedegebuure, Jeliazkova et al. 2002, p5). The increased awareness for international recognisable diplomas resulted in a continuous stream of reforms in the higher education system. One of these reforms is the implementation of the Bologna Declaration in Europe (Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003, p45). The Bologna Declaration and its ensuing activities (the implementation of the bachelor-mastersystem) were significant in that they gave external quality assurance an important role in ensuring and assessing quality (NVAO 2007b, p5). The adaptation of the system of quality assurance to the Bologna process requirements is known as 'accreditation' in The Netherlands.

The Dutch implementation of the accreditation system started in 2003. It became compulsory for each study programme leading to a bachelor's or master's degree to be accredited every six years. The latest evaluation reports identified the increasing costs as one of the main problem areas of the first round of accreditation (2003-2009) (Min OCW 2005; Onderwijsinspectie 2005a; Onderwijsinspectie 2005b; Onderwijsinspectie 2005c; Onderwijsinspectie 2006a; NVAO 2007a).

The increased costs, compared to the pre-2003 quality assurance system, are caused by the payments the higher education institutions have to make to the NVAO and VBI (the direct costs) and all the other activities higher education institutions must do internally to get and keep their accreditation (the indirect costs). The amount of money paid to the external costs is clear, but it is difficult to specifically measure the indirect costs. The indirect costs mainly consist of the amount of work, but those activities can be attributed to the accreditation and/or to the internal quality assurance system (Onderwijsinspectie 2005c, p7-8). The way the higher education institutions organise their internal quality assurance plays a role in this respect. Using this perspective, it is interesting to investigate the matter of how higher education institutions organise their internal quality assurance and whether that structure affects the experienced costs. That resulted in the following research question;

What are the effects of the structure of internal quality assurance for the experiences of costs of the accreditation system in Dutch universities of applied science?

In order to achieve an unbiased answer to the research question, five sub-questions were formulated. By answering these sub-questions one should arrive at the overall answer to the research question.

- *What are the organisational structures of universities of applied science?*
- *What does internal quality assurance mean and how is it implemented in the Netherlands?*
- *How do universities of applied science organise their internal quality assurance?*
- *How do the universities of applied science experience the costs of the accreditation system?*
- *What is the relationship between the experiences of the costs and the structure of the internal quality assurance system?*

Theoretical approaches
Under this header, the empirical framework for this study is discussed. The framework discusses the approaches which led to a well-grounded interview design and which gave a structure for the analysis. The framework exists of several theories about organisational structures. First, Keuning and Eppink (2000) describe organisational structure as follows;

- The division of labour into functions and tasks of individuals, working groups and departments.
- The agreed authority and relationships among individuals, working groups and departments for execution of their tasks.
- Formal organisational channels of communication and mechanisms through which individuals, working groups and departments are connected to each other for the necessary commands and coordination.

The second approach is Mintzbergs' configurations of organisational structures (Mintzberg 1979, p2). The model 'professional bureaucracy' is the organisational structure that shows the most similarities with the organisational structures of the professional higher education institution, because Mintzbergs' 'professional' means that the higher education institution is dependent of the knowledge and skills of the professionals (the teachers) in the organisation. The word 'bureaucracy' is used, because the behaviour in the institutions is regulated and coordinated through standardisation and formalisation. The contrast between those two makes higher education institutions complex. The professionals prefer to work autonomously; they have specific knowledge and experience which makes it hard for managers to have a 'grip' on them (Dicks, Meesters et al. 2005, p3). In this perspective, the use of quality models by higher education institutions offer visibility how the professionals work and if they fulfil all the (expected) requirements of the institution and manager.

More generally, quality models are used to develop a system that evaluates the organisation as a whole during a certain time span. Many professional higher education institutions use quality models as a starting point to organise their internal quality assurance in a systematic and, in theory, structural way. For this study the INK-model has been chosen. It has become quite well-known and valued in the Dutch higher education institutions. The INK-model gives organisations guidance on how to deal with the internal and external dynamics and complexity of the organisation. The model consists of a set of criteria, systematically articulated, representing the different organisational areas, that is, a subset of 'enablers' and a subset of 'results'. The INK-model, combined with the accreditation framework, will be used as a mapping tool to specify the questions for the interview sessions (Westerheijden 2008, p11).

Methodology

The research design is tailored to the purpose of this study and comprises a qualitative research with three case-studies and a literature review (Verhoeven 2007, p25)). The very fact that none of the present day literature gave a full overview of the organisational structures of the internal quality assurance systems of professional higher education institutions is indicative of the void on this topic, and equally of the importance of introducing this overview by means of this paper.

Case-studies and half-structured interviews are used to offer insight and to offer visibility on the differences between the higher education institutions. The cases in this study are three different types of professional higher education institutions. More precisely, the differences are about organisational independence or dependence (increasing chances that organisational structures have been adapted to partner organisations) and location (which part of the Netherlands). The institutions are; 1) Saxion, 2) Windesheim and 3) Hogeschool van Amsterdam. The cases differed on independent variables, which made it particularly worthwhile comparing them. At the same time, they were fairly similar on other, control, variables (such as size), which made comparing them easier.

In order to be sure that all aspects are included in the study, the Van Kemenade and Schaik model (Van Kemenade, Vermeulen et al. 2008, p243) was used. This model includes the aspects of the accreditation framework and the INK-model. By combining these models, one becomes aware of the

blind spots allowing the entire organisation structure of internal quality assurance. All aspects are also checked against the concepts of organisational structures of Keuning and Eppink.

Analysis and conclusion
The three universities of applied science have organised their internal quality assurance differently, and they also have a different experience on the costs of accreditation. Saxion is a centralised organisation with a structural and transparent internal quality assurance system. The department of quality assurance is centrally placed in the organisation and has both a supporting and controlling role. There is regular contact between the academies, the management, and the department of quality assurance. The employees in the academies work regularly (together) on their activities for the internal quality assurance. This is then regarded by some institutions as involving less additional work for the preparation of the site-visit. Saxion experiences the costs for accreditation as low. According to Saxion, accreditation is part of the process which is necessary to organise the (internal) organisation. They state; 'any additional work is worth all the effort and money, in order to form a picture of (the quality of) the study programme and the higher education organisation'.

Windesheim has a less structured internal quality assurance system, which is not embedded in the daily work processes. The schools use different formats for the implementation of the self-evaluation. Next, consulting between the involved parties takes place on a non-regular basis and the department of quality assurance can only act on request of the schools. Those three elements result in less transparency on if and how the system is implemented in the different schools. The missing structure and lack in transparency ensures that employees do not structurally fill in their evaluation forms and otherwise complete the other necessary activities for accreditation, which causes a lot of extra work during the months prior to the accreditation. This all makes that the internal quality assurance system is not yet accepted in the organisation, resulting in Windesheim experiencing the costs for accreditation as high.

The HvA has a different structure than the previous two, for it is decentrally organised. This means that all domains are responsible for their own quality assurance system and that there is no institutional broad manual for the structure of a quality assurance system. The control function appears in a meeting between the director of the domains and the Executive Board. The absence of a line relationship between the department of quality assurance and the domains and the lack in communication between the employees of the involved parties, results in an unclear overview of the different systems. In addition, the level of implementation in the domains decreases the transparency. Still, the HvA thinks relatively lightly about the costs for accreditation, because they consider it as a part of the professional organisation. Nevertheless, respondents said that it is sometimes frustrating how much time the internal quality assurance and the preparation for the site-visit costs. For a certain period of time several employees cannot work on their usual daily tasks, since they become totally absorbed with the self-evaluation and related activities. All these outcomes result in the following table.

Case	**Organisation internal quality assurance**	**Experienced costs**
Saxion	Centralised, structured and transparent	Low
HvA	Decentralised, structured and partly transparent	Partly low, partly high
Windesheim	Centralised, less structured and partly transparent	High

In conclusion, if the internal quality assurance is more structurally organised, the cost for the accreditation are experienced as low in comparison to the other cases. If an institution has a less structured internal quality assurance system, the costs for accreditation are experienced as high

compared with the others. The problem with a less structured organisation starts with the problem of internal motivation; a strong internal motivation to develop an internal quality assurance system leads to a better-organised quality system, which makes that accreditation feels less like a 'burden'. A well-structured system includes: transparency about structure, regulation, role of the quality assurance department and regular consulting.

Changing the internal motivation and the 'quality culture' of an organisation is difficult, therefore some practical policies must be changed first. In order to decrease the experienced costs, the internal quality assurance should be organised in a more structural and transparent way. To reach more transparency, two policies should change; 1) More similarity in the implementation of quality systems between the departments, all departments must obligatory use a similar format, set up by the educational institution, for their internal quality assurance. This similar format does not mean a complete structured model, but more a framework on how the information must be delivered, which requirements must be fulfilled and how this must be done and 2) More often and regular contact between the department of quality assurance and the study programmes. This will result in more clearness for all involved parties on how the quality assurance is arranged by the different study programmes. Besides, this could support and stimulate the departments to create a well-structured system, because their results became visible for the rest of the organisation. A combination of both policies will increase the transparency, and indirectly the structure, of the internal quality assurance.

Some professional higher education institutions experience that they must assure the quality of their study programmes for 'others' (NVAO and VBI) instead of achieving this for their own benefit only. Implementing an internal quality assurance system from their internal motivation could change the negative feeling around accreditation; one should make quality assurance a part of the regular institutional quality structure and 'quality culture'. In the 'quality culture' of these educational institutions it is necessary that employees are motivated to embed the activities for the quality assurance system into their daily tasks. When a structured and transparent internal quality system is implemented and the employees are motivated, more activities will be allocated to internal quality assurance and less to the accreditation system, which makes that accreditation will feel less like a 'burden´.

Furthermore, a short look forward to the 'second round' of accreditation, will support lower experienced costs. One of the changes in the 'second round' is the division of the current accreditation into an institutional audit and a (light touch) programme accreditation. Once the outcome on the institutional audit is positive, the accreditation for the study programmes comprises less work. Therefore the preparation of the site-visit will take less time, which results in lower experienced costs for accreditation.

As aforementioned, this study showed that the high experienced costs are not only caused by external factors, but are also derived from internal factors. Those internal factors are partly caused by the way professional higher education institutions organise their internal quality assurance system. In other words, the professional higher education institutions can do something internally to decrease the indirect costs, and because of that the high experienced costs. It is hoped by this researcher that this paper, with increased awareness and insight, will change the ideas about the importance of a well-structured and well-embedded internal quality assurance system, which will eventually lead to improvements of the internal quality assurance systems.

Table of contents

List of figures

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Globalisation and the knowledge economy are the two main factors which led to an increased interest in internationalisation of higher education. (Goedegebuure, Jeliazkova et al. 2002, p5). The result of this increased awareness for international recognisable diplomas is a continuous stream of reforms in the higher education system. One of these reforms is the implementation of the Bologna Declaration. The main goal of the Bologna declaration is; 'to create an European space for higher education in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education' (Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003, p45). The Bologna Declaration was signed in 1999 by 29 (currently 46) European countries (Commissie Rinnooy-Kan 2000, p6; Westerheijden, Cremonini et al. 2008).

In order to reach the goal of the Bologna Declaration, a tiered system of programmes and degrees was introduced in more than 40 European countries, in an effort to produce a higher degree system. Comparability and compatibility were central values in this search for the international higher education system (Kehm and Teichler 2006, p270). This system is commonly known as the 'bachelor-mastersystem'.

The implementation of this internationally recognisable system of bachelor and master degrees resulted in a demand for an international comparable system of the quality of degrees and the quality of education (Commissie Rinnooy-Kan 2000, p21). The introduction of a more convergent degree system would lead immediately to a need for comparable quality standards and, according to many experts, for the setting of minimum standards or requirements for the envisaged degree levels (Kehm and Teichler 2006, p270). Degrees can only be genuinely compared if there is a system in place which guarantees the quality of the different programmes. The bachelor-master's degree system, and the commitment of European countries to achieve a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) have offered external quality assurance that extra dimension. The Bologna Declaration and its ensuing activities were significant in that they gave external quality assurance an important role in ensuring and assessing quality (NVAO 2007b, p5). The adaptation of the system of quality assurance to the Bologna process requirements is known as 'accreditation' in the Netherlands.

The organisation responsible for the accreditation in the Netherlands, is the NVAO, which stands for the bi-national Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders (in Dutch: Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie). It was established by international treaty and it ensures the quality of higher education in The Netherlands and Flanders, currently by means of accrediting study programmes (NVAO 2007a, p5). The accreditation procedure is not singularly executed by the NVAO, since the actual evaluations are also executed by quality assessment agencies (VBIs, In Dutch: Vistiterende en Beoordelende Instellingen).

The Dutch implementation of the accreditation system started in 2003. It became compulsory for each study programme leading to a bachelor's or master's degree to be accredited every six years. Evaluations (examples see below) of the system indicated that many problems were experienced across the field. For that reason a new system was developed, aptly named: 'second round'.

In 2008-2009 the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the NVAO and a number of universities of applied science and research universities have tested this new system in the form of a pilot. The aim of this pilot was to test whether 'second round' solved not only the current problems, but was also able to avoid creating new problems. However, if the pilot were to identify (new) problems, was the system flexible enough to solve these problems prior to the true implementation of 'second round'. The outcomes of the pilot are discussed in the Dutch Parliament in December

2009, followed by a discussion about the changes in law in February 2010. Before the system can be implemented, the changes must be official approved by the Parliament. This will probably happens before the end of the year.

The latest evaluation reports (Min OCW 2005; Onderwijsinspectie 2005a; Onderwijsinspectie 2005b; Onderwijsinspectie 2005c; Onderwijsinspectie 2006a; NVAO 2007a) identified four main problem areas of the first round of accreditation (2003-2009), namely;

- Increasing costs
- Accountability function versus quality improvement
- Too little transparency on information and procedures
- Internationalisation

Those problems will be discussed below.

Increasing costs

The outcome of research conducted by the Inspector of Education 'Accreditation; mapping the costs' (Onderwijsinspectie 2005c) stated that the cost for external quality assurance was doubled compared to the Dutch system of quality assurance prior to 2003. This enormous leap in costs is a direct result of higher education institutions having to make payments to the NVAO and to the visitation committees. In addition, there are other trends that increase the costs, not in the least the freedom of the NVAO for making its own procedures. For example; the NVAO established a committee to revise the work of some visitation panels (hbo-raad 2005). The ever mounting costs are expected to be carried by those educational institutions which need accreditation.

Unfortunately, the report of the Inspectorate of Education did not make a distinction between the costs made only for accreditation and costs made for internal quality assurance of higher education institutions. Only an approximate distinction is made between direct and indirect costs. Direct costs are the payments to quality assurance agencies, and indirect costs could exist of the time and capacity used during the self-evaluation and preparation of external evaluation. Those indirect costs are also known as 'bureaucracy' (Onderwijsinspectie 2005b, p53).

The costs of the accreditation system are approximately € 10 million each year. This percentage is 0.36% of the total amount of money made available by the government each year, to support higher education. The aforementioned € 10 million are considered the sole direct costs. Yet is not clear what amount of money is made available for the indirect costs. It is therefore particularly hard to measure these costs, because, as stated, it is not clear which costs can be ascribed to the accreditation system and which costs can be ascribed to the internal quality assurance of the higher education institution itself (Onderwijsinspectie 2005c, p7-8). A distinction could be made in future between the level of work that assures the accreditation and the level of work that assures the level of internal quality.

Accountability function versus quality improvement

One of the main problems of quality assurance all over the world is finding a balance between the accountability function and improving quality (Min OCW 2008a, p5). On the one hand the government sets standards to ensure a certain level of quality in higher education. On the other hand one of the goals of the accreditation system is continually improving the quality of higher education. Are the standards set by the NVAO leaving enough room for quality improvement within the higher education institutions or are boundaries of the standards set very strict indeed, leaving hardly any room for quality improvement? The current comment is that there is a very strong orientation on processes and procedures, allowing too little attention paid to course content and equally leaving too little attention to quality improvement above the standard threshold level.

An effort of improving quality and therefore implementing new policies will lead to the fact that the processes do not follow the exact procedures anymore. Hence, procedures have to be rewritten and re-approved by the Executive Board as soon as an improvement is implemented. Understandably, it takes time to verify these processes and procedures, yet when during that period the site-visit takes place, it may well result in a negative score as a result. And since a negative decision leads to important legal effects, the higher education institutions will not easily allow this to happen. It leads to strategic behaviour of a 'better safe than sorry' nature of the institutions. The institutions therefore only implement improvements after the accreditation decisions have been made and unfortunately, it sometimes results in no improvements for the time being, because the consequences and level of uncertainty of the accreditation decision are too big (Onderwijsinspectie 2006a, p10). In order to reach the goal of quality improvement, and in finding a better balance between accountability and improvement, it must get easier for the higher education institutions to improve the quality of their study programmes. For the above stated reason, the attention of the accreditation system needs to be focussed on the content of the educational programme and needs to move away from a pre-occupation on processes and procedures (NVAO 2007b, p21).

Too little transparency
Information can be deceptive for it can be incomplete and can lack in transparency. For students it can be difficult to see the wood for the trees in the world of education. At present, students must actively search for the right information and it would therefore be a considerable improvement for students to see the outcomes of accreditation decisions, and accreditation overviews of their study programmes.

The direct and desirable result might be that an increasing number of students will be able choose a high-quality study, which will probably result in more competition between higher education institutions to create the best programmes. At the moment, students are not aware of differences in quality and indeed, most of the time they do not take variations in quality into consideration in their choice of a study programme. Thus, when Dutch students decide on where they want to study, they do not think in terms of `the best programme'. Instead, they look for any particular feature that may distinguish one university from another, such as specialisation or academic tradition (Nuffic 2007, p4). Vossensteyn concluded in his study that student choice appears to be most strongly influenced by the level of parental education, grade point average in secondary education, and factors like the distance between parental home and the higher education institution (Vossensteyn 2005, p178).

The second lack in transparency is about the vagueness of the relationship between the NVAO and the VBIs, and the position of the NVAO as an organisation (NVAO 2007a, p7; VVS 2008, p3). It is not always clear what the boundaries of the processes and procedures are, especially between VBIs and NVAO (NVAO 2007a). Questions that arise are; who decides on issues and who implements decisions? How much freedom have the VBIs in the NVAO reports? And last but not least, what is, and what should be, the role of the government in this?

In addition, there is criticism on the overlap between certain standards in the accreditation framework. For example, within the themes 'aims and objectives' and 'curriculum'. Another critical observation refers to the frameworks being 'fragmentary'. This means that the subdivision between the themes 'aims and objectives' and 'curriculum' is considered artificial and possibly too theoretical (NVAO 2007b, p41). In order to increase the transparency of the framework, the standards must be clearly determined without any overlap and fragmented elements.

Internationalisation
As previously mentioned, internationalisation is a dynamic and ever-changing field. In order to keep up appearances as one of the best developed quality assurance systems, it is necessary to regularly check the European guidelines and regulations in this field and to make necessary changes in the

system on time. Another important point in the field of internationalisation is the importance for Dutch higher education institutions to become easy comparable with institutions abroad.

It must be made easy for students to compare the different higher education institutions, both in the Netherlands and abroad. Higher education systems are by nature complex organisations, resulting in different rationales across the countries, unless boundaries are firmly tightened by an international board. It can be argued that higher education institutions must have the possibility to chose their own external evaluation approach (Harvey 2003; Onderwijsinspectie 2005b, p24). Yet the implementation of the accreditation (a 'one size fits all' approach) may not fit all rationales. On the other hand the implementation of one external evaluation approach, such as the accreditation, provides a better option in comparing the higher education institutions. A good balance between the centrally controlled (good for comparability) and regional differences in content (differentiated for the higher education systems and improvement in different countries) may well be considered desirable.

In the self-evaluation of the NVAO (2007) some points of critique and some points of attention are mentioned. First, from the international perspective it is pointed out that there is too little attention for the aspect of internationalisation in the accreditation framework (NVAO 2007a, p41). Secondly, by working in cooperation, the Netherlands and Flanders can outweigh individual countries in the balance of European developments in the field of external quality assurance. Given the Dutch and Flemish tradition in quality assurance, both traditions should be able to play an active role in international developments (NVAO 2007b, p69). Thirdly, the NVAO has mainly committed itself to establishing the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions as an impetus to the international recognition of degrees and qualifications by governments (NVAO 2007a, p77). At present, institutions that offer international programmes are confronted with different accreditation procedures and regulations in the countries involved. The European Consortium of Accreditation (ECA) and the Bologna ministers decided to incorporate an encouragement for mutual recognition of accreditation decisions in the Bergen Communiqué. That led to several bilateral and multilateral cooperation projects have been set up which, in accordance with the road map established by the ECA, should lead to mutual recognition of accreditation decisions (NVAO 2009a).

The rocketed costs and the increased level of work are experienced the biggest problems in the current accreditation system. The increased costs can not only be caused by more work for the higher education institutions, but must also have other causes. Using this perspective, it is interesting to investigate the matter of how higher education institutions organise their internal quality assurance and whether that structure affects the experience of the overall costs.

In the Netherlands there are two types of higher education programmes, namely; 1) professional higher education programmes with an orientation on the practice and the professional competences of the student and 2) research-oriented programmes with an orientation on research. Those differences in orientation lead to differences in programme, content, types of students and types of degrees. For both types of institutions different regulations are set up by the government. Due to time restraints, as well as complexity in the above matter, this study limits itself to the professional higher education institutions.

1.2 Objective of the study

Currently the costs of accreditation are perceived as very high, especially for the higher education institutions. Evaluation research conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education indicates the high level of bureaucracy as a cause for these high costs. Good quality of education is a right of each citizen and therefore a matter of national law. The

Dutch law of higher education (in Dutch; WHW) stated that every study programme must be accredited every six years. Alongside this ruling, many institutions have, in agreement with the NVAO standards, a (structural) internal quality assurance system. The group of higher education institutions which have a strong internal motivation for structural internal quality assurance system, experience fewer extra costs for accreditation than the institutions that are not internally motivated and simply only evaluate their study programme because of the accreditation. Hence the more the internal quality assurance is structural and systematic organised, the less extra work the accreditation will be.

1.3 Research question

This paper aims to explore the relationship between the structure of internal quality assurance and the experiences of the costs for accreditation. In the first two sections of this chapter I described the background information and the objective of my master thesis. Below, that information is summarised in figure 1. This model clarifies which elements are considered important to investigate.

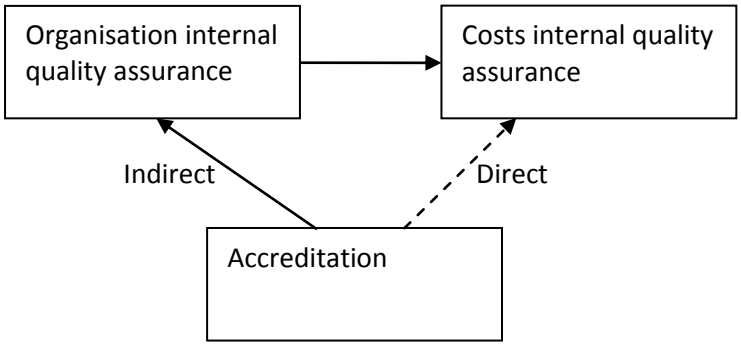


Figure 1; Relationship between research variables

The high costs of quality assurance are caused by two aspects, namely the accreditation and the organisation of the internal quality assurance. The costs of the quality assurance system partly exist of the direct costs for accreditation. These costs must be paid to the NVAO and VBIs, in order for higher educational institutions to get accredited. These costs are already calculated by the Inspectorate of Education (Onderwijsinspectie 2005c). Two other variables are less clear and are therefore interesting to explore: 1) the indirect costs and 2) the structure for the internal quality assurance. The literature does not describe the indirect costs in-depth, therefore we do not know the exact amount of those costs, and we do not know which part of those costs exists that belongs only to activities for accreditation or belonging only to activities for internal quality assurance. Those considerations leads us to the idea not explore the amount of the indirect costs, but how the educational institutions experience the costs. Those experienced costs could comprises as well the direct as indirect costs.

This leads to the following research question;

What are the effects of the structure of internal quality assurance for the experiences of costs of the accreditation system in Dutch universities of applied science?

In order to achieve an unbiased answer on the research question, five sub-questions were formulated. By answering these sub-questions one should arrive at the overall answer to the research question.

- *What are the organisational structures of universities of applied science?*

This question will be used to give a general description of the organisational and structural aspects of universities of applied science. Also a specific focus on models used for the organisation for the (internal) quality assurance will take place.

- *What does internal quality assurance mean and how is it implemented in the Netherlands?*

During this sub-question the structure and elements of internal quality assurance will be explained and a closer look at the current and future accreditation system (the external quality assurance) in the Netherlands will take place.

- *How do universities of applied science organise their internal quality assurance?*

In order to find the answer to this sub-question, interviews with an expert of the department of quality assurance within universities of applied science will take place. The interview-topics are based on the literature and theory which provided the answer to the first two sub-questions.

- *How do the universities of applied science experience the costs of the accreditation system?*

This question will be used to map the experienced costs of the universities of applied science. The main part will be discussed in the interviews, additionally information from evaluation reports will be added.

- *What is the relationship between the experiences of the costs and the structure of the internal quality assurance system?*

This question is the last step of exploration, prior to formulating the overall answer on the main research question. In order to reach the answer to this question, the outcome of the two previous sections will be compared to each other.

1.4 Structure of the master thesis

Chapter two exist of the theoretical approaches. First, a description of the organisational structure and characteristics of the professional higher education institutions will be made. Secondly, the quality models and self-evaluation are discussed.

In chapter three I will clarify my research strategy including the operationalisation of the concepts, the research method, the study population and the way in which I will collect my data.

Chapter four will find an answer on the second sub-question. It comprises a total overview of the quality assurance system in the Netherlands.

Subsequently, I will show the results of the case-studies. This chapter, chapter five, starts with an introduction. Secondly, the answer on sub-question three; "*how do universities of applied science organise their internal quality assurance?*" will be given.

In chapter six, the experienced costs of accreditation of the universities of applied science are described. The outcomes of this chapter together with the outcomes of chapter five will lead to a reliable comparison between the experienced costs and the structure of the internal quality assurance, which is provide in the chapter six as well.

Chapter seven consists of the conclusions. In the conclusion the answer to the main research-question will be formulated. Additionally, a short reflection on this study will be stated. Finally, the bibliography and appendices are enclosed.

2 Theoretical approaches

In this chapter the empirical framework for this study is discussed. The framework discusses the approaches which lead to a well-grounded interview design and give a structure for the analysis. At the same time, it shows the important organisational aspects of the higher education institutions. In the first section the organisational structures of the professional higher education institutions are described, including Mintzbergs' theory about organisational configurations. Next, the INK-model, as it is the most commonly used quality model in the Dutch higher education, which is followed by a short description about the self-analysis. This self-analysis plays an important role in the system of quality assurance.

2.1 Organisational structures professional higher education

Higher education institutions make large efforts to create an efficient and effective organisation, the way of organising their internal quality assurance is one of them. If their internal quality system is running smoothly, fewer problems will occur during fulfilling the steps of the internal quality assurance system. Before going deeper into this statement, the meaning and appearance of the organisational structure of the university of applied science will be described. In the next section the characteristics of professional higher education as a system are described, followed by some specifics of professional higher education institutions.

Little relevant information can be found in the literature about the organisational structure of professional higher education institutions. In the existing scientific literature about organisational structures, the main focus is on the research universities. This limitation makes it harder to create a complete picture of how professional higher education institutions have organised their internal quality assurance in order make a decent topic list for the interviews. On the other hand, it starkly shows the need for this particular piece of research, for it offers visibility in the shrouded organisational structure in the field of quality assurance.

2.1.1 Organisational structure

Many definitions can be found about organisational structures in business and industrial firms. Some of them can be applied to higher education institutions as well. The first definition is of Keuning and Eppink. They describe organisational structure as follows;

- The division of labour into functions and tasks of individuals, working groups and departments.
- The agreed authority and relationships among individuals, working groups and departments for execution of their tasks.
- Formal organisational channels of communication and mechanisms through which individuals, working groups and departments are connected to each other for the necessary commands and coordination (Keuning and Eppink 2000, p87).

The second definition of organisational structures is discussed by Mintzberg (1979). He described organisations simply as the sum total of the ways in which it divides its labour into distinct tasks and then achieves coordination among them (Mintzberg 1979, p2).

Next, an organisation is the planned coordination of the collective activities of two or more people who, functioning on a relatively continuous basis and through division of labour and hierarchy of authority, seek to achieve a common goal or set of goals. Two identifying characteristics of an organisation are a division of labour and a hierarchy of authority (Robbins 1983, pp5-6).

According to Weick (1976) an organisation does what it does because of plans, intentional selection of means that get the organisation to agree upon goals, and all of this is accomplished by such rationalised procedures as cost-benefit analyses, division of labour, specified areas of discretion, authority invested in the office, job descriptions, and a consistent evaluation and reward system (Weick 1976, p1).

On reflection, the definitions are relatively close to each other and consist of some overlapping elements. The definition of Keuning and Eppink for this studies' framework, for it is slightly more extensive than the others and comprises only the formal organisation. Informal organisations with aspects like trust, motivation and organisational culture are also important, especially for creating an efficient organisation. However internal quality assurance is something higher education institutions must achieve, even if the employees are not motivated to fulfil that task. Hence it is more important to chart the formal organisation first and see if there are elements in the formal organisation that can improve efficiency in the structure of the internal quality assurance. Efficiency in an organisation is not only important to decrease the level of work, but also to create a positive experience for all employees.

According to Robbins et al, complexity, formalisation and centralisation are the three core components of the organisational structure (Robbins 1983, p6, p7, p61, p79).

- Complexity considers the extent of differentiation within the organisation. This includes the degree of specialisation, division of labour, the number of levels in the organisation's hierarchy, and the extent to which the organisation's units are dispersed geographically.
- Formalisation is the degree to which an organisation relies on rules and procedures to direct the behaviour of employees. Formalisation is a measure of standardisation.
- Centralisation considers where the locus of decision-making authority lies. Organisations tend to be centralised or tend to be decentralised. The placement of the organisation on this continuum is one of the major factors in determining the type of structure that exists. In other words, the concept of centralisation meshes with the concepts of authority and the chain of command. Authority is what is centralised or decentralised, and the chain of command defines the path that decentralisation follows.

In order to clarify the different structures of organisations, the theory of Mintzberg (1979) will be used. Mintzberg discussed different configurations of organisational structures based on the following organisational aspects; techno-structure, operating core, support staff, middle line, and strategic apex (Mintzberg 1979, pp18-34). Aspects of the techno-structure are; the student administration, the electronic learning environment and the ICT provisions. The techno-structure is a small part in the higher education institution compared with the others. For the organisation of internal quality assurance it is not deemed very important to elaborate on the techno-structure any further, and it will therefore not be discussed in this report. As stated, Mintzberg developed different configurations of organisational structures. The model 'professional bureaucracy' is the organisational configuration that shows the most similarities with the organisational structures of the professional higher education institution (Dicks, Meesters et al. 2005, p3), because professional means that the higher education institution is dependent of the knowledge and skills of the professionals (the teachers) in the organisation. Bureaucracy is used, because the behaviour in the institutions is regulated and coordinated through standardisation and formalisation (Dicks, Meesters et al. 2005, p8).

Complexity, as previously mentioned by Robbins, is also an important aspect in the theory of Mintzberg. The professional needs autonomy for fulfilling his tasks, the tasks of the professional are too complex to be steered from a strategic apex and middle management. This has been caused by the experience and specific knowledge of the professionals. Which, for clarification's sake, does not

mean that the bureaucratic professional has problems with controlling the complexity of the higher education organisation. Rather, there are two manners in which to cope with, and approach, complexity. Firstly, it is impossible for the management to have the same level of specialised knowledge as the professionals. This results in the fact that the management cannot steer on the content of the study programmes. In that respect the teachers must have a certain degree of freedom to move and implement policies (this is an organisational reason for academic freedom, alongside other reasons for it). Using autonomous professionals and letting them take relevant decisions on their own (if they are capable to do so), makes it easier for higher education institutions to handle complexity. The second manner in which to carefully trod when handling complexity, involves the sheer diversity of schools and study programmes. Yet, by using many different teachers with their individual profession, the higher education institution can handle the diversity in study programmes (Dicks, Meesters et al. 2005, pp8-9).

The professional bureaucracy has under the strategic apex, the Executive Board, a relative small middle management (figure 2). On the left side of the middle management the techno-structure can be found and on the right side the support services. The support services includes the service desks, the international office, the library and the quality assurance department. In higher education institutions this is a big staff, the strategic apex and middle management delegate many tasks to the support services. This delegation leads also to decentralisation in the operating core, the study programmes and the professionals, less approval from the 'higher' management is needed for every step. This results in more freedom to move and shorter communication lines and it makes it possible for the managers to work more effective and efficient. The operating core, the study programmes, is the key part of the organisation (Mintzberg 1979).

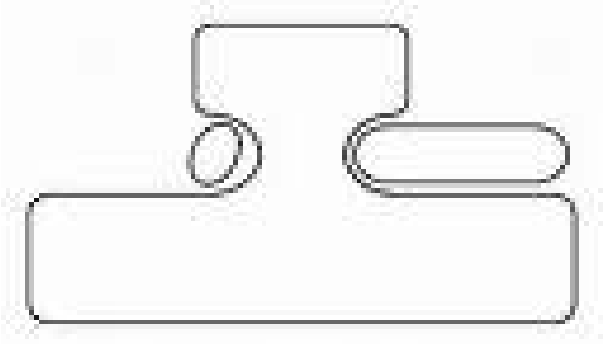


Figure 2; Professional bureaucracy by Mintzberg (1979)

The problem with quality assurance in this organisation is the delegation of tasks and the fact that there is no clear description of the tasks of the professionals. Since the support services, including the quality assurance departments, do not have a control function in the direction of the study programmes, it is difficult to judge the quality of the different organisational parts and the study programmes. It is also a constant struggle how to judge the work of the professionals without too much standardisation of the tasks. The tension between quality improvement and accountability becomes once again visible. Therefore an internal quality assurance system is necessary, for it is an important part in managing the professionals. The management wants some 'grip' on their professionals, and they want to know that their level of work is at a decent level, particularly since these professionals educate the future researchers, employers and decision-makers of society.

From an external view, quality assurance is important, in particular when reasoned from the fundamental perspective that education is a public good. Through accreditation it becomes clearly visible for society how tax-payers money is spent. The accreditation system will be explained in chapter four.

Many scientists discussed the theory of Mintzberg. Mintzberg organisational structures seem to be written from a sociological and observations perspective. In practice it would not be useful enough for business and industrial firms. Nevertheless, higher education institutions have a different character than business and industrial firms, they are non-profit institutions, which occupy a more stable environment than most the profit-only organisations.

From the perspective of Mintzberg theories it is important to organise the internal quality assurance in a structured way and consider using the basic principles of the organisational chart. From the point of view of the formal organisation this must lead to an efficient internal quality assurance. The aspects mentioned by Keuning and Eppink, together with the professional bureaucracy of Mintzberg, will form the basis of the structure of chapter five 'organisational structure internal quality assurance'.

2.1.2 Characteristics of (professional) higher education institutions

Universities of applied science are complex through their multidimensionality and multi-functionality. They are involved in teaching and research (the latter only on a larger scale since a few years) and they are in close contact with the labour market, senior secondary vocational education institutions (in Dutch; MBOs) and the research universities. This makes the interests and tasks they want to achieve complex, because it takes place in different fields of society. Within the institution there are differences in culture, type of students and type of tasks between the departments/schools. It is important that the professional higher education institutions do not lose control over their main task, namely teaching students. Those structured features, including the stability of the institution and the standardisation of skills, causes for universities of applied sciences to be 'hard to move'. Indeed, it takes time to make even a few changes in the organisational structure, involving many actors, aiming for avoidance of organisational fragmentation (Csizmadia 2006, pp51-54). In line with the teaching function of the institutions, it is important to keep in mind that higher education is primarily 'all about people'. The argument below is therefore from the perspective of teaching.

Fragmentation refers to the idea that within the different institutions similar tasks are done, but merely a few cross linkages between the institutions exist. Another concept that is often used for higher education institutions is 'loosely coupled systems'. Loose coupling conveys the image that coupled events are responsive, but that each event also preserves its own identity and some evident of its psychical or logical separateness. For example, in the case of an educational organisation, it may be the case that the counsellor's office is loosely coupled to the teacher's office. The image is that the teacher and the counsellor are somehow attached, but that each retains some identity and separateness and that their attachment may be circumscribed, infrequent, weak in its mutual effects, unimportant, and/or slow to respond (Weick 1976, p3). Loose coupling lowers the probability that the organisation as a whole will be able to respond to each little change in the environment that occurs (Weick 1976, p6). Changes in the organisation of the system must be coordinated differently and approached differently in every school, because they are not all organised in an identical manner. On the other hand, changes within the organisation of the higher education institutions are easier to make, because changes within one school does not affect the work and the processes in other schools. This could be applied in higher education institutions by organising quality assurance in a decentral approach. By using a more central approach, a decision must first be approved by the higher management, which needs more coordination and will heighten costs. The positive effect of a more central leadership is that the differences (in structure and organisation) between the schools will be smaller.

2.1.3 Specifics professional higher education institutions

This section is not directly a theoretical approach, but more a description of the context of the professional higher education institutions. This description is included in order to create a complete framework of the working of the professional higher education institutions in the Netherlands. The Netherlands has a binary system of higher education, which means that there are two types of programmes; 1) professional higher education programmes offered by universities of applied sciences and 2) research-oriented degree programmes offered by research universities. The distinction between professional higher education programmes and research-oriented programmes is very important in the Dutch higher education system and determines the admission requirements, content and length of degree programmes, as well as the degrees awarded (Nuffic 2007). Some points described in this section are valid for higher education institutions in general, but as mentioned before this research has a focus on universities of applied science. For that reason this paper will focus on the specifics of professional higher education institutions. The description of professional higher education shows the boundaries within the professional higher education must operate, especially within the field of quality. There is a big overlap with the actors involved in the field of accreditation and in the field of higher education in general. Thus, the actors will not be discussed here, only in the section of accreditation (4.2). In this section only a few specifics are discussed.

Number of institutions
In the year 2007-2008 the Netherlands had 51 universities of applied science and 13 research universities. The total amount of students at those institutions are 374,377 at the universities of applied science and 212,728 at the research universities (CBS 2008).

Regulation
The Dutch higher education system combines a unified education system, regulated by central laws, with decentralised administration and management of schools. Overall responsibility for the public-private education lies with the State, represented by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, and the legislative power of the Dutch Parliament (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden 2004, p325). The Ministry lays down the conditions, but does not set up the school. It only determines the norms for their establishment. The universities of applied science are required to specify their teaching programmes, the main subjects and form of the different examinations in the education and examination regulation (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden 2004, p326). It goes without saying that heightened freedom for the higher education institutions should go hand in hand with increased responsibility (Min OCW 2005). In the case of study programmes, it is obligatory for higher education institutions to have a quality assurance system.

In law, the basic structure of the university of applied science is regulated, which means that the management of universities of applied science comprises an executive board or central management board and a supervisory board. Besides the two boards, all universities of applied science have a participation council. The executive board consists of a maximum of three members. The chairman of the executive board is appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. According to the WHW all powers and duties have been delegated by the competent authority to the executive board. The executive board is responsible for managing policy preparation and implementation, co-ordinating the day-to-day affairs of the institution as a whole. Although the participation council consist half of staff members and half of students, the governance structure in the universities of applied science also reflects the relatively strong position of the executive board, particularly their chairman, as well as the heads of all faculties/ departments. In addition, since 1997, the participation council management has received greater autonomy, responsibility and accountability, as a response to a call for greater professionalism (Kovač, Vossensteyn et al. 2009, p73).

Grades and duration
One of the goals of the Bologna Declaration was the implementation of a bachelor-master structure in the higher education system. The bachelor-master system is divided in an undergraduate (bachelor) cycle and a graduate (master) cycle. For a bachelor grade in professional higher education 240 ECTS must be fulfilled, similar to four years of full-time study programme. At research-oriented programmes the bachelor phase is a programme of 180 ECTS, and the master phase can vary between 60 and 120 ECTS (Commissie Rinnooy-Kan 2000, pp12-14; Nuffic 2007). The master programme at the university of applied science comprises of 60 to 120 ECTS, depending on the discipline and the particular master's programme (Nuffic 2007). A master at the university of applied science focuses on further specialisation in a particular field of study. While the emphasis of higher professional master's programmes is on professional competencies, most include instruction in applied research as well.

The government does not fund most of the professional masters, therefore making the tuition fees for these particular study programmes very high, and even not-affordable for some. There are other master programmes which are funded by the government, these are the so-called 'care-masters'. Examples of these are nurse practitioner and physician assistant, the programmes in arts education and the teacher training programmes (Nobiles 2009).

Labour market
One of the main differences between universities of applied science and research universities is the level of focus on research. Students at research universities are taught to think academically and will master the skill on how to organise research on their own. It is generally supposed that this level of skill is achieved at the master's level rather than at bachelor level. The focus for students at the university of applied science is more linked with the labour market, for they must show that their view is of a more practical level, and that they have all the necessary competencies to enter work in a professional way. For this reason it can be said that the professional bachelor degree is therefore more closely linked to the labour market than a bachelor degree at a research university (Westerheijden, Cremonini et al. 2008, p30). Professional higher education prepares students for a wide variety of careers in seven sectors: agriculture, engineering and technology, economics and business administration, health care, fine and performing arts, education, and social welfare (Nuffic 2007).

Access
The following three educational institution, after qualifying, give access to the universities of applied science; the normal access route is five-year higher level of secondary education (In Dutch; havo), additionally it is possible to enter through intermediate level vocational education (In Dutch; MBO level 4) or six-year highest level secondary education (In Dutch; vwo). Students from abroad must achieve a study programme similar to the Dutch level or pass an (English) qualification test. Potential students older than 21 years of age who do not possess one of the qualifications mentioned above can qualify for access to higher education on the basis of an entrance examination and assessment (OECD 2006, p11, p33; Nuffic 2007). In appendix one an overview of those paths is added.

2.2 Quality models

Quality models are the second approach which is used in this study. Organisations use quality models in order to develop a system that evaluates the organisation as a whole during a certain time spam. Many professional higher education institutions use quality models as a starting point to organise their internal quality assurance on a systematic and, in theory, structural way. Each of these models has its own focus on aspects within the organisation. For this study the INK-model has been chosen. The main reason for choosing this model is that it has become quite well-known and valued in the

Dutch higher education institutions. The INK-model is a helpful tool for making a map of the total organisation and can be seen as a manual for mapping the management and the management processes (Westerheijden 2008, p11). The INK-model will be used as a mapping tool to specify the questions for the interview sessions and to make the sub-questions of a more empiric level. As the INK-model is the Dutch variant of the European EFQM-model, that model will be discussed first.

The EFQM-model is a set of criteria, systematically articulated, representing the different organisational areas. The EFQM sets of principles recognise the importance of customer focus and the key role of leadership in providing both drive and focus. It has nine criteria, that is, a subset of 'enablers' and a subset of 'results' (Csizmadia 2006, p79). The EFQM-model and the nine criteria are shown in figure 3.

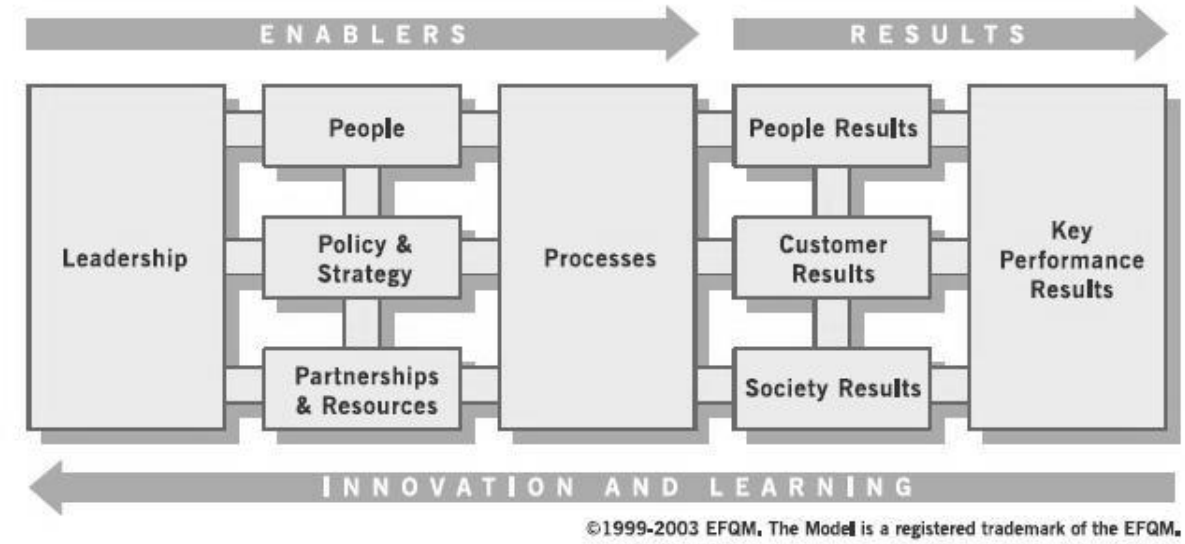


Figure 3; EFQM-model

The EFQM-model intends to provide a management and assessment tool for each higher education institution, supporting it self-analysis and simultaneously providing a source for quality improvement opportunities (Csizmadia 2006, p80).

The basis of the Dutch INK-model is similar to the EFQM-model. Anyhow, some specific information about the INK-model is needed. The INK-model teaches organisations how to deal with the internal and external dynamics and complexity of the organisation. The model has four different ways in how to use it;

- *Frame of reference*; the model is used as a frame of organising the different aspects in the organisation.
- *Diagnosis model*; the model is used to make strong and weak points of the organisation visible.
- *Development model*; the model is used to implement new strategic goal and visions.
- *Model of control*; the model is used as a Planning and Control instrument in order to get some grip on the progress and the development in the organisation. This results in annual plans, management reviews and annual reports (INK 2009, p13).

The goal of the INK-model is to support professional higher education institutions to improve their quality. Quality improvement can only work if the organisation continuously takes four steps, those steps are shown in the improvement cycle of Deming, the so-called Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle. By taking those steps over and over again, the higher education institution is working continuously on quality improvement (Polderman and Sirre 2005, p12). In order to receive information in all nine

fields of the INK-model, the professional higher education institutions use the self-evaluation. Because of the interest of the self-evaluation in quality assurance, it is further discussed below.

2.3 Self-evaluation

With a quality assurance system (and quality models in general) the institutions define their agreements, development direction, goals and improvement zones, and also describe their main processes (Polderman and Sirre 2005, p7). This process of the internal quality consists of a procedure where regularly monitor and improvement activities take place. Besides regular (every year or in part even every semester) monitoring and (small-scale) improvement, the major basis of those activities are the (self-)evaluations that take place every six years in the Dutch situation. The goals of self-evaluation are;

- To improve the intentions (purposes and goals), content, policies, procedures, services, organisational and intellectual environment and performance of the program or institution under study.
- To foster commitment by enacting the recommended improvements through participation in the study process.
- To enhance the capacity of the program or institution in question for continued self-assessment.
- To yield the basis for informed decision-making (planning) about the future of the unit under study.
- To yield written materials that can be used as the basis of external peer review and review by others within the larger institution or system (Kells 1992, p88).

During the process of the self-evaluation the circumstances of the institutions, such as the previous experience of assessment, the nature and stage of development of the goals, the status of information, any pressing needs, the extent of politisation, the interest of the leader, must be taken into account. The design of the procedure and the framework depends on the circumstances of the organisation. This does not mean that some elements of the self-evaluation framework do not have to be fulfilled. It means that at least those elements must be, to a greater of lesser extent, controlled. Kells mentioned seven elements that must be studied during the self-evaluation, namely; input (people, resources, and facilities), intentions (goals), external environment, education and research, services, management processes and the results (Kells 1992, p89). The outcome of the self-evaluation is a written report. For that reason and in order to judge the different elements on their level of quality the elements are converted into criteria. Through those criteria the professional higher education institutions know which goals much be reached. In terms of criteria for the accreditation, this are not completely same criteria as the self-evaluation, the external assessment agency (VBI) has an objective instrument to measure the performance.

As a conclusion it can be said that self-evaluation is a major part of the continuous improvement of the whole organisation. The self-evaluation (or internal audit) is the basis of the assessment, both internally and externally. In higher education institutions the self-evaluation links internal with external quality assurance, especially because the annual report and the report of the self-evaluation lead to a basic document for the site-visit of the VBIs. That means that the self-evaluation has an important role in the quality assurance system, fulfil all aspects of the self-evaluation (and/or quality model) asks a lot effort of the organisation in terms of the amount of work. Therefore the structure and elaboration of this self-evaluation could cause the structure of the internal quality assurance system and finally the experienced costs.

Many professional higher education institutions use the INK-model and the self-evaluation model in addition to the accreditation framework (see chapter four). Indeed, some aspects of the INK-model

are used in the accreditation framework. Therefore the INK-model will be used as control points during the interviews. This method will build a reliable and well-grounded interview design. In the chapters ‘research methodology’ and ‘quality assurance’ this connection will be elaborated on slightly further.

The structural features of the organisation of the professional higher education institutions are important in giving structure to the analysis of the case-studies. The definition by Keuning and Eppink will be used as the framework during the analysis and the comparison between the case-studies. All this with the complexity and autonomy of the educational professionals kept in mind.

3 Research methodology

This paper's research strategy comprises of four parts. The first part is the operationalisation of the concepts used. Secondly, the subjects of the study are introduced. Subsequently, the research method is described and analysed and finally the manner in which data will be collected is described. The research design is tailored to the purpose of this study and comprises a qualitative research with three case-studies and a literature review.

3.1 Operationalisation

During this research a few concepts have been used time and again. In order to fully understand their nature and meaning, it is necessary to elaborate on them further, on a sound basis of empirical literature findings. For most concepts many definitions can be found in the literature, for the purpose of this paper, the definitions are described according to the goals of this study.

3.1.1 Quality and quality assurance

Quality is an elusive concept and also a value-laden term: it is subjectively associated with that which is good and worthwhile (Green 1994, p12). That resulted in different concepts of quality in higher education, the following definitions are described by Green (1994);

- *The traditional concept of quality* is associated with the notion of providing a product or service that is distinctive and special, and which confers status on the owner or user (Green 1994, p13). Quality is a form of excellence with references to differentiated and exclusive character (Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003, p31).
- The notion of quality as *conformance to a specification or standard*. This approach has its origins in the notions of quality control in the manufacturing industry. It is a basis for measurement, a neutral term to describe a required characteristic of a product or service (Green 1994, p13).
- The definition of quality adopted by most analysts and policy makers in higher education is that of *fitness for purpose*. Exponents of this approach argue that quality has no meaning except in relation to the purpose of the product of service. Quality is judged in terms of the extent to which a product or service meets its stated purpose(s) (Green 1994, p15).
- *Quality as effectiveness in achieving institutional goals.* This is a variation on the fitness for purpose-model, it has more attention on efficient use of inputs (Green 1994, p15; Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003, p21).
- *Quality as meeting customers' stated or implied needs.* During the last 20 years, the definition of quality most often used in industry has evolved and is no longer given solely in terms of conformance to a specification but in terms of meeting customers' needs. High priority is placed on identifying customers' needs as a crucial factor in the design of a product or service (Green 1994, p15).
- *Quality as transformation*. The transformative view of quality is rooted in the notion of 'qualitative change', a fundamental change of form. Transformation is not restricted to apparent or physical transformation but also includes cognitive transcendence. In educational terms, transformation refers to the enhancement and empowerment of students or the development of new knowledge (Harvey and Green 1993).

In the current debate there is a realisation that the concept of quality is a multi-dimensional and multi-level one, a concept with different characteristics and consequences, but with a certain coherence about the core of the concept (Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003, pp24-25). The three core aspects embrace the following; goals, the process deployed for achieving the goals, and to which extent goals are achieved (Green 1994, p13). Quality is hence a relative concept, and different

interest groups or stakeholders in higher education may have different priorities, possibly resulting in their focus of attention being different (Vroeijenstein 1991), which results in different definitions and focus points of the concept of quality. The best that can be achieved is to define as clearly as possible the criteria that each stakeholder uses when judging quality, and for these competing views to be taken into account when assessments of quality are undertaken (Green 1994, p17). One can therefore conclude, for the purpose of this study, that the value of quality is a given, by what the professional higher education institutions understand by this terminology.

Many scientists defined the concept of quality assurance. When considering the term quality, the definitions exist of many different views and meanings, yet the definitions of quality assurance are much closer related. To show the differences and similarities, three definitions of quality assurance are discussed. The first one, *quality assurance* in general, is defined as that particular aspect of the overall management function that determines and implements the quality policy (intentions and directions of the organisation). Procedures might be imposed on institutions by the government or funding agencies, or the institutional or departmental management might set them up internally (Martin and Stella 2007, p34).

Secondly, q*uality assurance* comprises all planned and systematically carried out activities which are directly related to the maintenance of and improvement in the quality of education. It covers all activities, procedures, rules of conduct, formal mechanisms or organizational arrangements which are designed to ensure quality (Saryusz-Wolski, Chojnacka et al. 1997, p3).

Quality assurance can be split up into internal and external quality assurance*. Internal quality assurance* refers to the policies and mechanism implemented in an institution or programme to ensure it is fulfilling its own purposes and meeting the standards that apply to higher education in general or the profession or discipline in general. *External quality assurance* refers to the actions of an external body which assesses the operation of the institution or its programmes, to determine whether it is meeting the agreed standards (Martin and Stella 2007, p34).

In the Netherlands external quality assurance for higher education institutions and study programmes is called ‘accreditation’. Accreditation is used to denote the recognition of individual universities, faculties or field of study as meeting standards and criteria and thus being granted the right to provide (or to introduce) a given type of degree courses (Saryusz-Wolski, Chojnacka et al. 1997, p7). This process can imply initial and periodic self-study and evaluation by external peers (Vlãsceanu, Grünberg et al. 2007, p26). It can therefore also be considered as a form of external quality assurance.

In this study, internal quality assurance is the main focus and it defines all activities of professional higher education institutions. Hence it is all about simply getting and keeping quality (of the study programmes) on the agreed level. This level is not only set down inside the organisation, but also on national and European level. Important key issues are; goals reached, efficiency, basic of excellence quality, structural processes and transparency.

3.1.2 Types of costs

Literature shows little theory about the differentiation between the direct and indirect costs of the quality assurance system. More specific, there is little information in the literature about the content of the indirect costs. In the subjects of business administration and economics, a lot has been written about the direct and indirect costs specifically. The distinction that is made in those subjects does not directly suit this study, because the specific definitions used do not immediately fit within the field of higher education. It would seem that an entirely new study is required to match existing fields, roles

and tasks to the chosen domain of higher education. Still, this paper will attempt to explain the types of costs and the definition as they will be used in this study.

First, the definition of the concepts of costs in general. *Costs* are the outlay or expenditure (as of effort or sacrifice) made to achieve an object or the amount or equivalent paid or charged for something (Merriam-Webster 2009). In other words, costs is the consensus of value and worth, in order to acquire a good or a service.

In business administration and economics the direct and indirect costs are explained as followed; direct costs are the costs directly attributed to the manufacturing of a product (or costs unit/ project). The opposite to this is the indirect costs, which consists of the costs which are therefore not directly attributed to the manufacturing of a product.

When the above is translated to external quality assurance in higher education, this leads to the following definitions of direct and indirect costs. The direct costs exist only of costs for accreditation (the product) and the indirect costs exist of costs for accreditation and for the internal quality assurance (Onderwijsinspectie 2005c, p8, p23, p30). Direct costs are the payments to the VBIs, the NVAO and the subsidy of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The indirect costs are the costs for the internal quality assurance system and additional costs for accreditation and therefore exist also of the amount of work the institution must do to get and keep their accreditation. The particular activities necessary for achieving quality assurance are not considered relevant for the sake of this argument, for this research is focussed on the build up of costs only, in order to measure the quality assurance in higher education.

Next to the direct and indirect costs, the experienced costs are an used concept in this study. The experienced costs are about how the educational institutions feel about the costs for accreditation, are the costs worth the effort. The costs for accreditation comprises the direct and, partly, the indirect costs.

3.1.3 (De)centralisation

As mentioned earlier, according to Robbins (Robbins 1983), centralisation considers where the locus of decision-making authority lies. Organisations tend to be centralised or tend to be decentralised. The concept of centralisation meshes with the concepts of authority and the chain of command. Authority is what is centralised or decentralised, and the chain of command defines the path that decentralisation follows.

A second definition, centralisation means that decision-making become concentrated at a particular place in the organisation, mostly at the level of the senior management (Keuning and Eppink 2000). Centralisation is about the distribution of the manifest powers of decision-making and the (re)allocation of resources (Carnoy 2001). That makes that decentralised organisation will spread responsibility and power away from the centre to various and lower level managers (Answers.com 2010).

Concluding, in this study centralisation is defined as a decision-making and a control function that are concentrated by the Executive Board, the management of the organisation. The internal quality assurance is made at a central point in the organisation and the procedures, not the concrete implementation, are similar for the different study programmes. Decentralisation means that the directors of the schools have more freedom to make their own decisions in terms of internal quality assurance. The decisions for a certain quality model are made decentral.

3.2 Research population

The professional higher education institutions are the focus of this study. In order to create an overview about the organisation of internal quality assurance three professional higher education institutions will be studied concerning how they approach quality assurance and concerning their organisational structure, to explore the differences in costs of quality assurance among institutions.

Also with an eye to increasing validity, this paper will explore three professional higher education institutions of a different kind, to increase the chance of the independent variables (organisation in general and organisation of quality assurance) will be different as well. The differences have to do with organisational independence or dependence (increasing chances that organisational structures have been adapted to partner organisations) and location (which part of the Netherlands). In order to make a reliable comparison between cases, it is important to have cases of approximately the same size. As one of the aspects is the organisational structure and professional bureaucracy, it is necessary to study how the institutions handle complexity. Following on from this, is the exploration of organisational (in)dependence of the professional higher education institutions. This is connected to the extent of cooperation at the management level of research universities. Research universities are differently oriented and have different organisational structures than professional higher education institutions. This could affect the structure of the quality assurance system especially, because the standards of accreditation for professional higher education institutions and research universities are different. As a final area of interest, the location of the institutions will be analysed, for different locations may well lead to a different focus, which may hence lead to a different philosophy behind the structure of the organisation and the internal quality assurance.

The first case is Saxion hogescholen. Saxion is located in the East of the Netherlands on three campuses, in Deventer, Enschede and Apeldoorn. Saxion has over 20,000 students and approximately 1,700 employees. On their website Saxion mentions that one of its main characteristics is a personal approach to the student. Saxion encourages every students to have her or his own personal learning path. A flat organisational structure with short communication paths enables this approach. In Saxion's annual report, the focus for the next few years comprises of strong relations with the labour market, internalisation and achieving excellence. This was designed to attract more international students, but has also translated in a strong regional policy. Currently over 12 percent of the students come from abroad (mainly Germany). The goal of Saxion hogescholen is to offer a broad supply of study programmes in the East of the Netherlands, which is spread optimally (Saxion 2008; Saxion 2009a).

Since 2007 Saxion has institutional cooperation programmes with other higher education institutions, namely hogeschool of Arnhem and Nijmegen (HAN), Stenden University, Hogeschool Windesheim and the University of Twente, but also with the intermediate vocational training (in Dutch; MBO, middelbaar beroeps onderwijs). The cooperation with Windesheim and HAN led to a new institute offering professional higher education oriented study programmes, 'Kenloo Apeldoorn' (Kenloo 2009).

Saxion offers 60 bachelor programmes and 13 master programmes, and Saxion Next (the private institution) offers 26 bachelor programmes. Out of those programmes 53 bachelor programmes from Saxion and 21 bachelor programmes from Saxion Next are accredited (NVAO 2009b).

The second case is Christian Hogeschool Windesheim (from now on; Windesheim). Windesheim is, just like Saxion, a strong regional oriented professional higher education institution. Windesheim has campuses in Zwolle, Utrecht and Groningen. The main campus, the one in Zwolle, is located in the middle of the Netherlands. Almost 18,000 students receive Windesheim education and over 1,700 are employed by Windesheim. They try to stimulate delegation of knowledge and circulation of

knowledge through personal needs of the student. In order to reach this, Windesheim offers personal study programmes. In addition, they focus their education programmes on competence learning, which offers a personal development plan (Windesheim 2007; Bacheloropleidingen.nl 2009a).

Windesheim has different institutional cooperation programmes. The most well known programme is the cooperation with one of the Universities in Amsterdam, the VU University (in Dutch; Vrije Universtiteit Amsterdam). In 2005 this cooperation resulted in a combined board of directors. This board controls Executive Boards of both Windesheim and the VU. However, this cooperation did not result in the benefits as expected. Since 1 January 2009 the managerial cooperation has been demerged. Close cooperation on study programmes, pre-master programmes and enrolments will continue (Besturenraad 2009). Other institutional cooperation programmes are with the communities of Zwolle and Apeldoorn, Province Overijssel, University of Twente, Saxion Hogeschool, HAN and MBOs.

Windesheim offers 46 bachelor programmes, 38 of those bachelor programmes are currently accredited (Qompas 2009; Bacheloropleidingen.nl 2009b).

The last professional higher education institution is the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (HvA) located in the West of the Netherlands. In 2007 almost 35,000 students were enrolled and 2,600 employees were working at the HvA (HvA 2008). The 83 bachelor programmes (HvA 2009) of the HvA are situated at different locations in Amsterdam and at two locations in Almeria. Of the total amount of study programmes 70 of these are given on a full-time basis. And 37 of the 70 full-time bachelor programmes were accredited on the 1st of July 2009 (Bacheloropleidingen.nl 2009b; NVAO 2009b).

As well as Saxion and Windesheim, the HvA also has a few institutional cooperation programmes. The most important cooperation is the one with the University of Amsterdam (Uva) and the Amsterdam Medical Centre (AMC). Their management is combined and, for example, the time-schedule for the different levels and institutions are the same. In 2010 every bachelor programme must has at least one immediate possibility to enrol in a fitting master programme at the UvA or the HvA (UvA and HvA 2007, p36). Alongside internationalisation and new technologies, competence learning, independence and self-help of students are important characteristics in the study programmes of the HvA.

The three institutions belong to the top of professional higher education institutions of the Netherlands, in numbers of students, employees and study programmes. This makes the internal quality assurance system more complex, calling for more structure, more communication skills, enhanced control and last but not least, an effective way of working together. As a further variable, all cases are located in different parts of the Netherlands. Finally, all institutions have certain cooperation programmes. But not all cases are (closely) related to a research university. The management of the HvA is merged with the management of the UvA, Windesheim has just demerged with the VU and Saxion has no contract for cooperation on the management level with a research university.

3.3 Research method

The qualitative research method will be used. The data analysis will take place in an open and flexible environment (Verhoeven 2007, p25). To specify this, it means that it will be a qualitative field research (Babbie 2004). There are many different approaches to the qualitative research method and this paper will use the approach of case-studies, a focus on one or a few examples of a social phenomenon (Babbie 2004, p293). Every institution has the freedom to decide how to organise their

internal quality assurance system. Therefore the literature gave no full overview of the organisational structures of the internal quality assurance systems of professional higher education institutions. Case-studies make it possible to give a certain level of overview and make the differences between higher education institutions visible. Case-oriented analysis is an analysis that aims to understand several cases by looking closely at the details of each one individually (Babbie 2004, p371). In this final part of the research the different case-studies will be compared in order to establish where universities of applied science differ from one another in terms of organising their quality assurance.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Literature review

It was of considerable interest to hold a detailed literature review on about the subject of internal quality assurance in the professional higher education institutions. This was particularly the case when it became clear that professional higher education institutions are much less often the subject of a thesis paper than research oriented study programmes. During the in-depth literature review, it was possible to make a more detailed overview of the existing information, allowing for a more structured approach during the interview sessions.

The information is (among others) obtained from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Inspectorate of Education, the HBO-council and the NVAO. The information is comprised of policy papers, regulation, evaluation reports, annual reports and articles from scientific journals.

3.4.2 Interviews

According to Babbie (2004) an interview is a data-collection that consists of an encounter where one person (an interviewer) asks questions of another person (the respondent) (Babbie 2004, p263). In this paper the interviews are held in order to construct a clear picture about the relation between the organisation of internal quality assurance and the perception about the high bureaucratic level of the accreditation system.

The sub-questions and the theoretical approaches can be seen as the basis for the topic list during the interviews. The basis exists of three subjects, namely;

- Organisational structure quality assurance
- Differentiation aspects quality assurance
- Experienced costs accreditation

In order to be sure that all aspects are included the Van Kemenade and Schaik model is used. This model includes the aspects of the NVAO and the INK-model ((Van Kemenade, Vermeulen et al. 2008, p243). By combining these models, one becomes aware of the blind spots allowing the entire organisation structure of internal quality assurance to become visible. All aspects are checked by the concepts of organisational structures of Keuning and Eppink (see 2.1.1). The concepts of Keuning and Eppink are later, in chapter 5, used to give structure to the analysis.

The next step is dividing these subjects into questions and control points. Those control points are necessary in order to reach insight in to the situation. This way of interviewing is called half-structured and ‘qualitative interview’, based on a set of topics to be discussed in depth rather than based on the use of standardised questions. That means that the questions are open-ended. The respondent is asked to formulate his or her own answer to the question (Babbie 2004, p245, p300).

The other control point in order to be sure that full information is received about the quality assurance in the professional higher education institutions, is that the topic list is sent a few days prior the interview to the respondent. This gives the respondent time to reflect on the questions and their particular answers and allows them to search for additional information about the internal quality assurance process. Hence the respondents were sent a short version of the topic list (see appendix 3). In this short version the introduction per subject and the control points are left out. This will reduce the socially desirable answers. By not showing the direction of the interview, it will probably lead to a more objective picture of the organisation, and so increase the validity of the research. During the (taped) interview notes were made. This results in full accessibility to the information during the data analysis.

At this point the validity and reliability are increased in justifying every step, taping the interviews, registering the data in a systematic way on a basis of the theory, and following the interview techniques (Verhoeven 2007, p167, p264). From an interviewers perspective it was very important to keep on top of the interview techniques by staying neutral and by avoiding getting subjective. Obviously, asking clearly formulated questions was another theme of importance (Babbie 2004, p142, p264).

One expert was interviewed on quality assurance per professional higher education institution. All experts are members of the quality assurance department in the professional higher education institutions. Appointments were checked to ensure dealing with the right employees of the institutions (Verhoeven 2007, p167). Most of the questions asked were about (not publicly documented) facts. For that reason one respondent per professional higher education institution was enough. For research purposes only information on how the quality assurance is organised at the level of the institution was needed, as well how this was acted upon by the different institutions. Besides the objective information about the structure, the experienced costs with the accreditation system was also briefly discussed. The topic list used during the interviews can be find in appendix 4.

4 Quality assurance

Quality assurance can be distinguished in two areas, which are internal quality assurance and external quality assurance (the accreditation). Generally speaking, internal quality assurance entails everything that an institution does internally -without external influence- to keep their quality on a high level. External quality assurance refers to the actions of an external body which assesses the operation of the institution or its programmes, to determine whether it is meeting the agreed standards (IIEP 2006, p17). The system of external quality assurance has four main functions, namely; quality improvement, external accountability, transparency for the market and regulation of the higher education system (Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003, pp31-32). It is a fine dividing line between the activities that belong only to internal quality assurance and activities belonging only to external quality assurance. The aspects of accreditation are intertwined with the aspects of internal quality assurance. Internal quality assurance can be considered a separate aspect within the accreditation framework. This will be discussed at the end of this chapter. Prior to this, a clear overview of the meaning of internal quality assurance and accreditation and what this looks like in the Netherlands will be offered, followed by a comparison between the INK-model and the accreditation framework.

4.1 Internal quality assurance

In accordance with the aforementioned structure, here follows a short description of the main points of the internal quality assurance. Internal quality assurance encloses all the activities the higher education institutions must do internally for their quality. In this study internal quality assurance is more focused on all the internal activities the professional higher education institution must fulfil in order to get and keep the accreditation. Unfortunately, professional higher education institutions can decide to broaden their activities around internal quality assurance by focussing on activities which they deem important themselves. Therefore, and due to the fact that internal quality assurance is also an aspect in the accreditation framework, some aspects of external quality assurance become visible. Hence it can be stated that internal quality assurance exist of two parts as described in-dept below.

First, each quality assurance system of the professional higher education is organised according to their own model. This leads to different internal quality assurance models in the institutions. Many institutions use a quality model, for example the INK-model, as a basis for the structure in their internal quality assurance system. In the ideal situation, a good internal quality assurance system is embedded in a structural and continuous way and it comprises all elements of the organisational structure as defined by Keuning and Eppink. Little is written on this matter in the literature, which becomes visible in the interviews.

In the Netherlands the NVAO regulates the standard which higher education institutions must achieve for their internal quality assurance. The NVAO uses the European standards for the Dutch accreditation framework. These European standards are set down in Dutch law. Internal quality assurance is one of the aspects in the accreditation framework. The place and aspects of the internal quality in the accreditation framework can be found in figure 4 on page 38. Next, the (inter)national regulation about internal quality assurance is introduced as a part of the external quality. The Bologna Declaration gave quality assurance an important role in ensuing and assessing quality. The European level regulations and standards are set for the EHEA. This is achieved by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The ENQA described in their report ‘Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA’ the European standards and guidelines for quality assurance. With this report the ENQA wants to develop ‘an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance’ and ‘to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies’ (ENQA 2009, p6). The

standards cover three aspects; internal quality assurance of higher education institutions, external quality assurance of higher education, and quality assurance of external quality assurance agencies. The following standards of the internal quality assurance are to be adhered to;

- *Policy and procedures for quality assurance*; institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.
- *Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards*; institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.
- *Assessment of students;* students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.
- *Quality assurance of teaching staff;* institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so.
- *Learning resources and student support*; institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.
- *Information systems*; institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.
- *Public information*; institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering (ENQA 2009, p7).

For further insight, lets explore the following examples of external quality assurance of higher education and quality assurance of external quality assurance agencies standards.

- *Development of external quality assurance processes;* the aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.
- *Processes fit for* purpose; all external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.
- *Periodic reviews*; external quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.
- *Official* status; agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the EHEA as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.
- Independence; agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.
- *Accountability* procedures; agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability (ENQA 2009, pp8-9).

4.2 Accreditation

The definition and function of the accreditation in the Netherlands, the current as well as the future accreditation system will be discussed in the following chapter. This comprises an overview of the actors, aspects and changes in the accreditation system.

4.2.1 Definition

Accreditation is a formal, published statement regarding the quality of an institution or a programme, following a (cyclical) evaluation based on agreed standards. It delivers a quality mark to institutions and study programmes (Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003, p15). On the basis of evaluation and site-visits external bodies criticise the level of quality of the study programme. In the Netherlands accreditation is granted for a period of six years (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden 2004, p337).

Before continuing with the description of the function and system of the accreditation, another (international) definition of accreditation is offered. The UNCESCO uses a very extensive description of the accreditation. It was defined as the process by which a (non-)governmental or private body evaluates the quality of a higher education institution as a whole or of a specific educational programme in order to formally recognise it as having met certain pre-determined minimal criteria or standards. The result of this process is usually the awarding of a status (a yes/no decision) of recognition, and sometimes of a license to operate within a time-limited validity. The process can imply initial and periodic self-study and evaluation by external peers. This international used definition is suitable for the Dutch variant (Martin and Stella 2007).

4.2.2 Function

In the Netherlands a more specific definition for accreditation is used; for example, the study programme needs to be completed within a certain period of time. Should this time element be surpassed, a re-accreditation will be necessary. Recognition of boundaries leads to important legal effects (Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003, p18). It gives permission to institutions to offer education, but it is also a mechanism for the government to give an institution or education access to the higher education market within the boundaries of the law. In other words, this education does lead to a certificate of quality with public civil rights and the institution will receive funds by the government (Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003, p20). When a course is accredited, an institution receives funds from the government and the institution can register themselves in the Central Register for Education within the Higher Education (CROHO, In Dutch; Centraal Register Opleidingen Hoger Onderwijs) which leads to the possibility for students to receive a student loan and a degree after their study. The consequences of the accreditation decision are enormous, especially when the decision is a negative one. When a negative decision has been reached, degrees become worthless, for they are no longer recognised as such resulting in students also not being able to receive their student loans (Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003, p143).

The function of external quality assurance is converted into five goals of accreditation;

- Create transparency in the education system.
- Ensure independency and unequivocality in quality assessment.
- Enable international comparisons between degree programmes.
- Enable foreign course providers to access the Dutch market.
- Continue to increase the quality of Dutch degree programmes (Onderwijsinspectie 2005a, p10).

4.2.3 Current system

In 2003 a new quality assurance system of higher education was implemented in the Netherlands. It builds upon (and in part replaced) the existing national systems of quality assurance (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden 2004, p328). This current system is running, depending on the current policy developments, till 2011. In this section the current accreditation system will be described. First, a short description of the different actors within the system including their main tasks will be described. Secondly, the criteria of accreditation are put into a figure. Finally, a description of the stages of the accreditation system will take place.

Actors

In the process of accreditation, a lot of organisations are involved, all of which have the possibility to influence and are often asked to do so. In order to fully understand in which field quality assurance takes place, it is important to know which actors are involved and what the relationships between those actors are. Below an overview of the organisations which are involved including their main role and tasks in the system.

Ministry of OCW

The ministry, as the governmental institution, is accountable for the quality assurance in higher education. The ministry does not have real practical tasks, it is more of a supervisors role (Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003, p113). This means that the ministers of the Netherlands and Flanders, also the Committee of Ministers, supervise the appropriate functioning of NVAO, although it has no power over NVAO operations or decision-making. The Committee of Ministers approve the budget, the annual report and the annual accounts of the NVAO (NVAO 2007a, p14, p30). Finally, the ministry is responsible for the appointment of the members of the NVAO.

Inspectorate of Education

The Inspectorate, as an organisation belonging to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, is responsible for supervising the system. They ensure the quality-control and check if the higher education institutions act within the law. Furthermore the Inspectorate is responsible for the functioning of the NVAO (Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003). The supervision of the Inspectorate of Education is established in article 14b of the Dutch law of the supervision of education (In Dutch: Wet op het Onderwijstoezicht) (Onderwijsinspectie 2005a, p9).

NVAO

Under the in 2003 introduced accreditation system, an independent accreditation body the Netherlands Accreditation Organisation (in Dutch: NAO) was established by enforcement of law. The NAO has independent members with expertise in the fields of higher education, professional practice and quality assessment. They are appointed by the minister of Education, Culture and Science (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden 2004, p337). In September 2003 the NAO started to cooperate with the Flanders accreditation organisation. At the end of 2004 the Parliament of the Netherlands and Flanders confirmed cooperation. This resulted in the establishment of the NVAO in February 2005 (Onderwijsinspectie 2005a, p9).

The NVAO has defined its mission as follows:

'The NVAO independently ensures the quality of higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders by assessing and accrediting programmes, and contributes to furthering this quality. In addition, NVAO contributes to raising quality awareness within higher education and advancing the position of higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders in the national and international context' (NVAO 2007a, p14).

The tasks of the NVAO are regulated in the higher education and research act (WHW, article 5.2; (Min OCW 2009a)). The main tasks are;

- Activities in order to provide accreditation to educations in the higher education.
- Perform the so called 'test new education' (in Dutch; toets nieuwe opleiding).
- Consider the frameworks of accreditation and testing with other European countries

The accreditation procedure is not fully executed by the NVAO, as the evaluation is carried out by the VBIs. In cases of doubt, for example, on matters of the VBIs reported quality, the NVAO can appoint an independent research team. The NVAO particularly evaluates the institutions that demand distinctive (quality) features[1] (Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003, pp112-113).

VBIs

The actual evaluation in the accreditation procedure is considered the responsibility of an assessment agency. The assessment of programmes is carried out by assessment panels under the supervision of quality assessment agencies. These panels are selected by the quality assessment agency. Panel members should be independent. In the Netherlands their independence is monitored by the quality assessment agency prior to the assessment procedure. NVAO also monitors the independence of panel members while judging the assessment report.

The higher education institutions are not allowed to choose any assessment agency. The evaluation can only be recognised for NVAO accreditation if the agency is on the list produced by the NVAO. A few examples of assessment agencies are; NQA, QANU, Hobéon and Certiked VBI bv. (NVAO 2009c). The tasks of the VBIs are described by 'stages in accreditation process'.

Professional higher education institutions

The professional higher education institutions are held accountable for the level of quality of their study programmes as well as being held accountable for the quality of their institution. In order to receive a site-visit of the VBIs, the institutions must make a self-evaluation, which exists at least of the aspects of the NVAO. Permanent ongoing self-evaluation implies that quality improvement is a continuous process, which it is.

Accreditation framework

Earlier, the standards and guidelines of both the ENQA and NVAO are described. Those standards are set down in the WHW article 5a.8, section 2 as six aspects of quality. These six aspects must be achieved by all higher education institutions prior to getting accredited, for they represent the level of the study programme, content of the programme, educational process, efficiency of the study programme, sufficient facilities and an adequate evaluation assessment. The aspects are split up in different criteria. Those criteria are converted into measurable points. In figure four you can see what the different criteria are and how they are related.

The afore-mentioned INK-model is used to map all the management processes and the management of the institution, it comprises the total organisation in all its aspects. The accreditation framework also consists of all aspects of the organisation. However, it is less focused on improvement and efficiency than the INK-model. The accreditation framework is more focused on the presence of the criteria and how those are developed. Still, the INK-model can be used to fulfil the requirements for

[1] Accreditation is aimed at a standard level of quality. In order to give the higher education institution the possibility to profile themselves, they can request the NVAO for a judgement about a distinctive quality features. Those are spilt up in; 'distinctive features' and 'distinctive quality'. When assessing 'distinctive features', 'realisation' and 'distinguishing nature' are the starting points. The quality criterion 'distinctive quality' involves the excellence of a particular standard (NVAO 2006).

an internal quality assurance system of the NVAO (Van Kemenade and Schaik, p239), particularly because the INK-model is larger than the accreditation framework. In appendix 2 the combined models are put into a table.

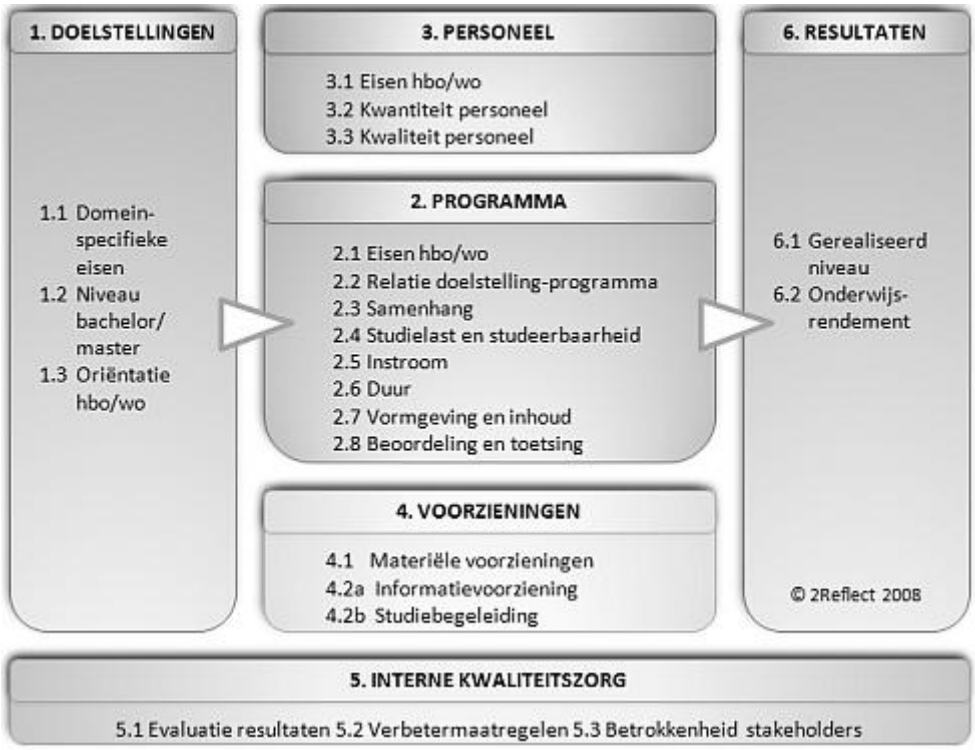


Figure 4; Accreditation framework (Pijl 2009)

Stages in accreditation process

Different formal stages must be taken before a higher education institution gets its accreditation (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden 2004, p339; NVAO 2007a, pp15-16). First, the self-evaluation report of the higher education institutions. This report is written by the institution and forms the basis for the external assessment. The self-evaluation report contains a description and evaluation of the study programme. This is achieved in accordance with the standards and the criteria of the accreditation framework (NVAO 2009d). The institution sends the self-evaluation report to a quality assessment agency. The self-evaluation report is not made public and is not included in the accreditation application that is filed with the NVAO, as the report should contain self-critical and reflective aspects on the basis of which a panel should be able to form balanced judgements (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden 2004, p339).

The second step is the site-visit of the quality assessment agency. The external assessment is taking place during a one or more days of visits of the VBI to the higher education institution. During these visits the higher education institution must clarify the self-evaluation and must add additional data to the assessment panel. This data exist of showing the facilities (such as lecture halls, laboratories, computer facilities and libraries) and letting the representatives of the study programme and the assessment panel discuss (Jeliazkova and Westerheijden 2004, p339). On the basis of the self-evaluation report or the programme dossier and the site-visit, the panel reaches a judgement of the programme. The panel writes their findings, considerations and conclusions in an assessment report which they send to the higher education institution (NVAO 2009d),

Finally, the moment supreme has arrived: the accreditation decision takes place. The institution submits an application for accreditation of their study programme to NVAO by sending the assessment report. The NVAO uses its evaluation criteria in the accreditation framework to evaluate

the assessment report, the overall conclusions expressed in it, the panel composition and the methodology used. This means that NVAO verifies whether the programme offers constant quality. On basis of that information the NVAO makes her final decision. This decision will be published together the report made by the VBI (NVAO 2009d).

If the accreditation decision is negative, the higher education institution has one year to fulfil the accreditation criteria. After that year a new external assessment will take place. In most of the cases the second visit is done by the NVAO (NVAO 2007a).

4.2.4 New system

All study programmes must be accredited before the end of 2008. Many study programmes have stalled their application (due to pressure and meeting deadlines) until the beginning of 2008, prior to applying for the accreditation. This caused further pressure (and even arrears of the accreditation applications) for the NVAO to complete the processing of all the applications within the procedural timeframe (NVAO 2008, p3). In September 2009 most of the arrears were solved (Min OCW 2009b). Presently, the exact changes and regulation for the second round are discussed in the Parliament in February 2010. The approval of the changes will probably happens before the end of this year (NVAO 2009e).

Alongside the problems mentioned in 1.1; increasing costs, accountability function versus quality improvement, too little transparency and internationalisation, the following problems also occur;

- During every accreditation process constraints and general institutional aspects must also be described by the higher education institutions. This leads to a higher level of the administrative work.
- A negative decision by the NVAO has many consequences for the study programme. The higher education institution will create strategic behaviour (see 1.1. 'accountability vs. quality improvement') in order to prevent that the accreditation decision becomes negative.
- The NVAO has no opportunity to change their decision, even not when there is strong evidence (Min OCW 2009b).

The problems and disadvantages have lead to a few new goals for the next round; the accreditation system and the assessments must be more relevant and more efficient. This means that the accreditation system must be stronger connected with the higher education institutions as a whole, the assessment must include more of the content, less of the processes and more consulting between the peers (a bigger role for the teachers during site-visits). Most important is that the higher education institutions experience the accreditation as less bureaucratic and less time consuming (Onderwijsinspectie 2009, p10, p14).

The goals are converted into some concrete starting points for the second round;

- External independent criticism about the quality of the study programmes and higher education institutions in general is necessary.
- High bureaucratic costs must decrease.
- Higher education institutions must guarantee regular and independent criticism of the study programmes, under supervision of the NVAO.
- Quality assurance must 'fit' the organisation. For example; merely light evaluation where deemed appropriate, yet also heavy evaluation where required.
- The new accreditation system must be accepted internationally (Min OCW 2008a).

In conclusion it can be said, that the first round has a focus on judging the base quality of the higher education institutions. The focus of the evaluations in the second round will be more on the subject

of content rather than on the processes and boundary conditions. This will result in a better balance between accountability and quality improvement (Min OCW 2008a).

Aspects and changes
The goals and starting points for the second round of accreditation leads to changes in the accreditation policy. This must lead to a decrease number of problems higher education institutions experienced through accreditation. The policy changes are described in this section.

Institutional audit
When an institution shows that their quality assurance is well organised and the quality of the study programmes are continuously improved, the institutions will earn a different regime of accreditation. This regime is called 'earned trust' (In Dutch; verdiend vertrouwen). 'Earned trust' leads to a lighter programme audit. Once the institution is already accredited, the assessment panel will only look at the study programme of the to-be accredited study programmes, and they will not focus on the whole institution. This leads to less work for the study programmes, allowing them to focus on the quality (and implementation of improvement) of their study programmes, without all the additional requirements, since those points are already met in the institutional audit.

The aim of the institutional audit is to establish if the institution is in control over the quality of the study programmes it offers to the students. The main focus is hereby the process of quality assurance and not to judge the quality of the study programme. The judgment of study programmes will be fulfilled during the programme accreditation. The assessment of the institutional audit will be accomplished by an audit panel of independent experts. This panel will be installed by the NVAO. For the programme accreditation it works differently, described in the next section '*assessment panels and role VBIs'*.

The lighter programme accreditation is only applicable if the outcome of the institutional audit is positive. A positive decision of the institutional audit will lead to the situation of 'earned trust'. By a negative decision the institution will be evaluated again after approximately one or two years. This new control moment is measured by the 'normal' accreditation process for the institution. When a negative decision has been made for a study programme, the institutions get a two-year 'repair period' in order to improve their quality. At the end of this two year period a new evaluation will take place. When the improvements have failed, and the quality is still not considered satisfactory, the study programmes will not be accredited.

In order to clarify the difference between the institutional audit and the programme audit, it can be concluded that the institutional audit is focused on the processes and procedures at the general level of the higher education institutions, like HRM procedures and the quality assurance system. Yet, the programme audit is focused on the study programme itself and not on (policies of) the institution.

Assessment panels and role VBIs
The higher education institutions are not obliged to let VBIs do the external site-visit for the programme accreditation. The institutions are free to choose if they want an external body (like a VBI) for the site-visit or organise it internally (Min OCW 2008a). The reasoning behind this, is that the VBI must be paid quite a lot market-conform prices and when the higher education institutions organise it themselves, the 'mediation' costs do not have to be paid.

The institutional audit is be executed by an expert panel chosen by the NVAO. This panel will use the self-evaluation in combination with a site-visit to make up their minds.

Training audit panel
The secretary of the audit panels must be trained, in order to get a certification of independency and adequate method of working (NVAO 2009f). The training must include the following aspects; audit competencies, communicative competencies, and how to use documents, reports and the assessment a three or four-points scale (Onderwijsinspectie 2009, p6).

New standards
The NVAO developed a new framework; institutions must fulfil six standards and study programmes must fulfil three standards. In the current situation, the 'first' round, some criteria in the standards are double and it is not clear for the study programmes what is meant exactly by some points. A clearer framework is needed in the next period (Onderwijsinspectie 2009, p64). These standards were the foundations on which the current system was build. Further change and improvement will hopefully lead to less administrative work for the institutions (NVAO 2009f, p12).

Test round and future
As mentioned in 1.1. at the end of 2008 and during the beginning of 2009 a test round, a so-called pilot of the new system, took place. The outcome of this pilot showed that the higher education institutions reacted rather positive on the new system, but also arrived at some recommendations. The recommendations in order of the aspect and changes are discussed below.

Institutional audit
The institutions where positive about the audit, even though it does not decrease the work load. It gave an impulse to the quality assurance within the institutions (NVAO 2009f, p21). During the institutional audit, quality assurance was the main subject, yet focus on content is also desirable (Onderwijsinspectie 2009, p62).

Assessment panels and role VBIs
During the test round it became visible that organising the assessment internally, including composing their own panel, creates too much work for the higher education institutions (Min OCW 2008a). It was found to be difficult to find experts who do not already have a connection with the institution (Onderwijsinspectie 2009, p54).

Training audit panel
The higher education institutions evaluated it to be useful to give the audit panel a one-off short training, in order to improve their audit skills. This leads to a more constant and efficient judgement of the institution/ study programme.

New standards
A further improvement of the standards for the institutional audit is necessary. It is not always clear what is meant exactly by the standards and they have some overlap (Onderwijsinspectie 2009, p68).

The most important outcome is that the higher education institutions did not experience that the biggest problem in the first round, the high level of work, the bureaucracy, was solved. Despite that higher education institutions experience the second round as an improvement, some further improvements need to be made, in order to create a more efficient framework. In order to improve the second round, the Ministry is still working on an improved law. The law is discussed in the Parliament in November 2009. After that discussion in the Parliament the framework and regulation are set. Those changes are discussed in the Parliament last February. The final version will be discussed somewhere end of 2010 and will include some small changes. This means that some changes could occur in the points mentioned above. These changes are not expected to be big, for presently, even small changes will improve the accreditation system, allowing it to be far more efficient.

5 Results

5.1 Introduction

The elaboration of the results must lead to an answer on the research questions. The first two sub-questions are already answered in earlier chapters. In this chapter an answer on the sub-question; *'How do universities of applied science organise their internal quality assurance?*' will be given.

5.2 Organisational structures

With the outcomes of the interviews and with some general information from the websites of the cases an overview of the organisational structures of the internal quality assurance of the professional higher education institutions is created. The cases are described on the basis of the description of Keuning and Eppink. Their description of organisational structures comprises the following three elements; distribution of tasks and existing power relations, machinery of internal consulting, and internal quality assurance processes. After the individual case descriptions, a comparison between the cases will take place.

5.2.1 Saxion Hogescholen

Distribution of tasks and existing power relations
At the top of the organisation we can find the Supervisory Board. This Board controls the Board of Directors and controls if the organisation reaches its goals. The Board of Directors is the daily management of the organisation, they have contact with the lower levels to see what they are doing.

The study programmes of Saxion are subdivided in thirteen academies in Enschede, Deventer and Apeldoorn. The director of every academy is responsible for a high level of quality of the study programmes and a continuous quality assurance system.

The eight support services of Saxion have a line relationship with the Board of Directors. Quality assurance is a part of the service 'Onderwijs en Student' (Education and Student). The department is called 'Onderwijsontwikkeling en Kwaliteitszorg' (DOK), translated in English it is the department for educational development and quality assurance. DOK advises and supports Saxion as an institute and separately the domains on the field of educational innovation, development of new study programmes, request of the accreditation and the accreditation process itself. They handle everything in the field of quality assurance (advising, set up, and the functioning of the system). The director of DOK is responsible that the department can fulfil the following tasks; that quality assurance is set up, appointments are subsequent and initiatives about new innovations and developments are taken. Their task also includes the development of the criteria for the internal quality assurance framework for the academies.

The academies are responsible for their own quality assurance (system). It does not matter how they organise it, as long as they do it and if they use the criteria from the 'Saxion-wide' framework. The function of the quality staff is filled in differently by the academies; the quality staff member can be a teacher who receives some extra hours to fulfil that task, or may be a staff member of the management level.

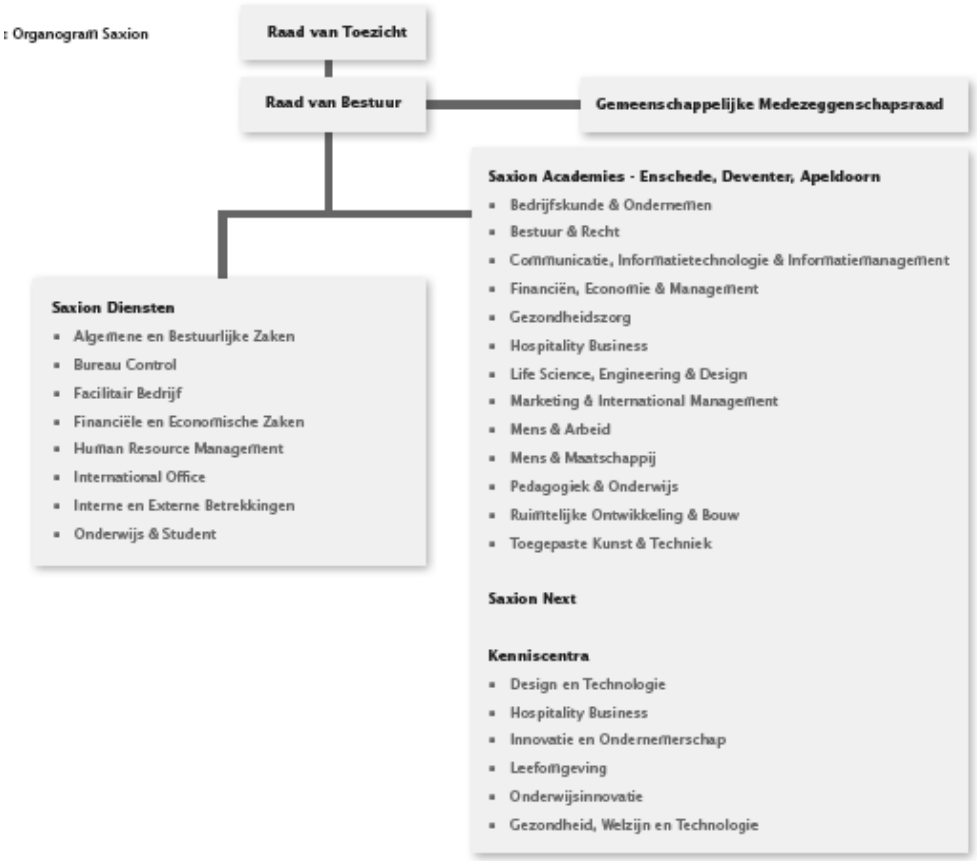


Figure 5: Organisational chart Saxion

As can be seen in figure 5, Saxion controls and secures its quality assurance very centrally in the organisation. The implementation is organised in a more decentralised way.

Machinery of internal consultation

In the organisational structure of the quality assurance of Saxion are three formal meetings, namely;

- Meeting between the support services and the Board of Supervisors; management consulting
- Meeting between academies and the Board of Supervisors; management consulting
- Meeting between DOK and quality staff members of the academies and other support services; Saxion Meeting Quality Assurance (SOK, In Dutch; Saxion Overleg Kwaliteitszorg)

The quality assurance policy, their problems, advice about solutions, new developments and ideas are the main subjects during the management consulting. For the academies and support services there is enough space to bring in new ideas during the meeting. Academies have also the opportunity to give their opinion about the (new) policy. When academies are really negative about a new policy, the policy will not be implemented. The outcome of the meetings between the academies and the Board of Supervisors are presented in the meetings between the support services and the Board of Supervisors and vice versa.

The SOK is an regular organised (operational) work meeting between DOK, de quality assurance staff members of the academies and the quality assurance staff members of the other support services. During those meeting problems of the system are discussed and exchange of information and experiences is taking place, for example; how departments organise their internal quality assurance, which procedure they use during educational innovation, which procedure they use by processing data and what happens with the return data. Finally, the outcome of the reports made for the P&C

cycle (discussed on farther afield) are discussed. The outcomes of those meetings are presented during the meetings between DOK and the Board of Supervisors.

Simultaneously, DOK has direct and informal contact with the director and quality staff members in the academies. Those contacts are used to support the academy by creating and organising their internal quality assurance system, but also support them during the accreditation procedure.

Internal quality assurance processes
In 2000 the professional higher education institution IJsselland and the professional higher education Enschede became Saxion Hogeschool. Both professional higher education institutions had their quality assurance partly shaped, but both institutions did not have a complete structured quality assurance system. In other words, some quality processes where visible, but it was not a smoothly running system. After the merger and the expected implementation of an accreditation system a more concrete quality assurance system was implemented during 2000-2002.

The quality assurance system of Saxion exists of two cycles, which are running at the same time. The first one is the regular planning and control cycle (P&C cycle). Here the reporting of and responsibility for the processes in the organisation are located. The P&C cycle is a PDCA-cycle and takes place at different levels, namely; level of the institution, academic level and level of the study programmes. Each level has installed the P&C cycle on its own way. The P&C cycle exist of three elements;

- Four-year cycle; strategic plan at institution and academic level.
- Annual cycle at institutional level; spring memorandum, multi-annual budget, management reports, annual report, annual account.
- In correlation with the annual cycle at institutional level, an annual cycle at the academic support services level.

The second cycle is the internal quality assurance cycle. This is the six yearly cycle for the accreditation of the study programmes. The cycle consists of; a provisional evaluation and an internal audit done by staff members of the academies and support services, the preparation for the external audit and the application for accreditation by the NVAO. As a model for the internal quality assurance framework the INK-model is used. Saxion does not follow the exact process including the manuals and score boards of the INK-model, it rather adopts the steps and the procedures. Subsequently, that framework is being integrated with the aspects of the NVAO. In as well theory as practise it means that Saxion does not have to fulfil extra tasks in order to fulfil all the accreditation criteria. The outcomes on both quality assurance cycles are made into a digital document system (DKS) and a Compliance Management System, which can be seen as an actual back-office system.

The academies may decide how they want to implement the P&C cycle and quality assurance cycle, as long as they fulfil the centrally decided requirements. The requirements includes agreements on what the academies must deliver (annual report, audit report) and that it is organised in a systematic way. The justification of those activities are taking place by the means of reports and during the management consulting. This can be seen as line responsibility. In terms of the development of policy there is an indirect line between the Board of Supervisors and the academies.

The quality assurance policy, as described before, is realised with the support of the so-called quality management system (KMS) in which processes, instruments, tasks and the responsibilities are set. The implementation in the sub-levels (level of institution, level of academy/ support services, level of study programme, and level of employees) differs, but the goals to reach are the same for all levels, namely; the implementation of quality assurance policy, achievement of the quality framework and the advancement of the continuous improvement of the quality at all organisational levels.

5.2.2 Christian Hogeschool Windesheim

Distribution of tasks and existing power relations

The Executive Board is responsible for the daily management of Windesheim, and is accountable to the Supervisory Board. The Executive Board has contact with the directors of the schools and set constraints for the quality assurance. The schools are free to decide, between the lines of the set requirements, how they arrange their process of quality assurance. Every school and support service is an independent unit with its own management.

Quality assurance is a department of the support service 'Student- en Onderwijsservices' (SOS). This department is responsible for the student- and educational services for Windesheim and comprises functions related to the external quality assurance and maintaining contact with external parties, and functions related to the internal quality assurance, they are responsible to support the schools.

In terms of structure we can say that the department SOS centrally supports and advises the internal quality assurance. The practical consequence, the schools are responsible for the quality of their study programmes and therefore integral responsible for their own quality assurance system. That does not mean that the schools must arrange it all by themselves, they are allowed to ask the department SOS for support and advice. Thus, the department SOS gives only on request support to the schools. The department SOS does not have a control function and no line responsibility in the direction of the schools. That causes, that the department SOS, the schools and the Executive Board have no complete overview if and how (structural) the different schools organise their internal quality assurance. The Executive Board wants a more control functions for the department SOS, and is developing an new task description for this service.

Figure 6; Organisational chart Windesheim

Machinery of internal consultation
A consultation about problems, progress and development between department SOS and the Executive Board as well between the department SOS and the schools is not taking place on a regular base, if it is taking place. That results in a second lack in transparency on the structure of the internal quality assurance, the different layers in the organisation do not have a notion how the internal quality assurance is organised by the (other) schools. At the moment Windesheim is developing a new policy concerning the internal consultation in the organisation of their internal quality assurance, more and regular contact between the actors dealing with quality assurance. Combined with the increasing control function of the department SOS this must lead to more transparency.

Internal quality assurance processes
Windesheim have set up different (internal) quality assurance processes. In general, all processes for internal quality assurance are set up at the central level, but schools are free to decide how (and for some formats even if) to use the format. First, the Windesheim Educational Standards (WOS) gives a frame which the schools and study programmes must require for passing the accreditation. This framework give the schools the freedom to organise the didactical aspect of education on their own. For the support function of the department SOS the differences between the schools sometimes leads to difficulties, problems occur more often during the control function. Here it is important that it is clear how and which frames the schools are using, before any conclusions are being made.

Secondly, Windesheim has a manual 'quality of assessment' (in Dutch; kwaliteit van toetsen en beoordelen). The fact that the schools are not obligatory to use this handbook to organise their internal quality resulted in differences between schools on how their internal quality assurance is structured. Those differences are also caused by the fact that the schools organise their internal quality assurance by themselves in less contact with other domains and less control of the department SOS.

Thirdly, Windesheim uses the INK-model and 'quality cards'. The 'quality cards' are also called the 'maintenance file' and comprises aspects of the INK-model, the WOS, and the accreditation framework. The 'quality cards' are used to determine to what extent Windesheim controls and improves the quality of their study programmes and their organisation. The schools use the outcomes of the 'quality cards' for the self-evaluation. Currently, those outcomes are not consequent enough documented, some programmes do it only once per six years, some others more regularly. That means that the quality cycle is not enough embedded in the daily work processes, it is not structural enough implemented.

Concluding, Windesheim uses the accreditation framework of the NVAO, the questions of the VBI, and the framework of the HBO-council as the starting point for their internal quality assurance system. Those documents are used to build guidelines, and the above mentioned processes, which are a helpful tool for writing the self-evaluation. The guidelines are developed by the department SOS, if the school answers all the elements of the guidelines they are well prepared for the accreditation process. Again, there is no moment of control if and how the schools deal with the guidelines.

Windesheim has a contract with one VBI. From that view Windesheim developed a format for the self-evaluation together with that VBI. The self-evaluation exists of two documents;

- Position report (6-8 pages); a summary of the current procedures, policies and vision on every NVAO aspect.
- Information report (1-2 page per criteria, total 30-40 pages); a more in-depth vision on all NVAO aspects.

Besides, everything done for the accreditation, Windesheim organises internal audits. The internal audits are held every six years and it build upon the INK-model. The audits cannot be compared with the accreditation procedure, because they are taking place at the level of the schools and it does not measure the quality of the study programmes. That does not mean that the internal audit is completely unusable for the self-evaluation. For example; point 5 'managing of processes' of the INK-model is useful for both. The outcomes of the internal audits are put in a digital system.

5.2.3 Hogeschool van Amsterdam

Distribution of tasks and existing power relations

The organisational structure of the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (HvA) exists of four 'layers'. At the highest level we have the Board of Directors, the Executive Board and the 'Centraal Bestuurlijk Overleg' (CBO). The directors of the domains participate in the CBO. The Executive Board is responsible for the policy of the HvA as an institution and their functioning, the policy of the HvA is centrally controlled by the CBO. The second layer are the support services, here called the staff services, which exist of different departments. One of those departments is the department Education and Research (O2). The department Quality and Assurance (Q&A) is a sub-department of O2. The third organisational level are the domains. The directors of the domains have full responsibility for their own domain, they are able to decide how they want to structure and organise their quality assurance. The final layer exists of the study programmes. From another perspective, the first layer is the strategic level. The level of the support services and the domains are the strategic and tactic level. And the fourth layer, the study programmes, is the operational level.

The department Q&A has a dual responsibility, they give support to the domains and the individual study programmes. Their main responsibility is in the direction of the Executive Board, it comprises the written reports an advice about the how the quality assurance can be organised, only on request of the Executive Board. In this perspective the department has written the format for the internal audit. Concluding, we can say that the department of Q&A is primarily aimed at the Executive Board.

The HvA has chosen for a decentralised system, because they find the differences between the domains too big to organise the quality assurance unambiguously. Their idea is that creating more freedom for the domains, the domains feel a greater responsibility of organising their quality assurance well and achieve a decent level of results. Thus, every domain is free to organise its own quality assurance. This results in big differences in how and by whom the schools organise their internal quality assurance.

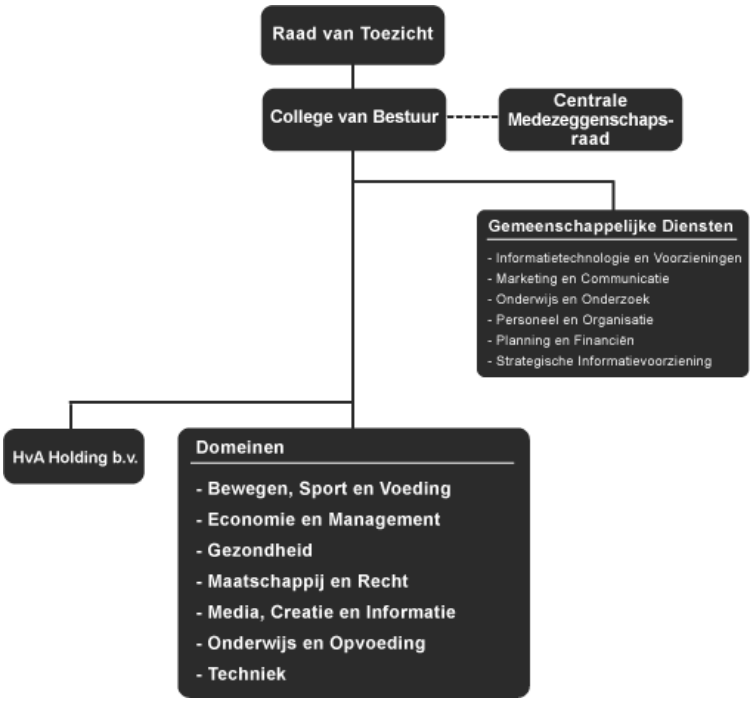


Figure 7; Organisational chart HvA

The HvA cooperate with the University of Amsterdam (UvA). This cooperation does not have a big influence on the organisation of the internal quality assurance of the HvA, because accreditation is something for an individual study programme. Only when study programmes of the HvA and the UvA cooperates, the NVAO must find some evidence during the accreditation.

Machinery of internal consultation
The HvA has different formal consulting moments were the (internal) quality assurance is discussed. The main one is the HvA broad organised 'network of quality assurance'. This consultation, organised by the department Q&A, takes places every six weeks. It can be seen as the expertise centre of quality assurance. Everyone who has a function connected to quality assurance or is interested in quality assurance (also teachers) is allowed to take place during those meetings. Problems, developments and monitoring data are discussed and collective instruments are developed. In addition, the department of the Q&A, as one of its function, gives the domains, unasked, information about development in the accreditation system.

Secondly, the staff services and the Executive Board have regular contact. During those meeting, were all directors of the staff services are present, the Executive Board will receive advice. In other words the staff services are the advisory body of the Executive Board, one of the staff services the department of Q&A is a part of this consultation.

The feedback about the internal quality assurance in the domains takes place in a consultation between the director of the domains and the Executive Board twice a year. In the perspective of the line relationship, the hierarchical responsibility, it is the correct way. Here, the policy, in context of the P&C cycle, plans of the domain are discussed. The department of Q&A has no role in here.

Finally, at the level of the domains the staff members of quality assurance may completely decide on their own if and how often the consulate each other. Formal consultation, like a consultation with an agenda, chairman and minutes, is implemented in the quality assurance cycle of some domains, but in general it takes place on an informal base.

Internal quality assurance processes
The quality system of the HvA is build up from three connected quality cycles, all are based on the PDCA-cycle, with each their own goal and dynamics;

- Cycle of accreditation and audits (integral quality)
- The P&C cycle (management steering)
- The 'onderzoekshuis' (HvA 2007)

Every study programme runs the internal audit, hold by the department of Q&A, every six years. During the audit, the focus is on; the process of education, the improvements that needs to be made to fulfil the aspects of accreditation, and the internal motivation of the study programme to deliver the best possible results. The difference between the internal audit and accreditation of the HvA is the internal audit has the aim to improve quality, were accreditation is focused more at the accountability function (see also 1.1). The outcome of the internal audit is discussed with the director of the domain, the Executive Board and the department of Q&A. Besides those internal audits a few domains have their own review on the working of their quality assurance system. The outcomes of those reviews are not sent to the department Q&A. That shows once again that the department Q&A and the domains have no real line relationship.

The outcome of the internal audit is the basis for the self-evaluation. For a complete self-evaluation the study programmes must add how they worked on improvement since the internal audit and proof that this quality improvement is a continuous process. The VBI will take a look at those changes.

The HvA wrote some manuals, in which the NVAO aspects were leading, about the process during the application of the accreditation. This does not mean that the HvA has a central format about how the domains must organise their quality assurance. It is only a format for the application of an accreditation.

The second quality assurance cycle is the P&C cycle. In the P&C cycle most elements of the accreditation framework can be found. Every year the management of the domains make a 'result- and activity plan (R&A plan)'. The R&A plan results in goals and policy for improvement, those are settled down in a contract between the directors of the domains and the Executive Board. This whole process calls the P&C cycle. The R&A plan gives the domains direction about their organisation and the structure of their quality assurance.

Finally, the 'onderzoekshuis' make the perspective of stakeholders, like students, alumni, staff members and the labour market, visible. The outcomes of those evaluations can be used as evidence during the internal audits, the accreditation process and as input for the R&A plans. The evaluations are an compulsory aspects for the accreditation. It is mentioned here, because the HvA developed her own evaluation instrument in order to fulfil those NVAO criteria.

The HvA find that the INK-model cannot be compared with or be a part of the internal audit and P&C cycle. For that reason only some domains use (some elements from) the INK-model. Finally, it is up to the domains how they archive their documents and how they keep the archive up to date.

5.2.4 Comparison case-studies

The three universities of applied science have organised their internal quality assurance differently, although there are similar elements. Having described the individual cases, now is the time to make an overview of those differences and commonalities. That makes it possible to make some critical

reflections in the next chapter on the organisational structure in relation to costs of accreditation. The comparison uses the same framework as applied for the description of the individual cases.

Distribution of tasks and existing power relations
The layers in the organisational chart of Saxion, Windesheim and HvA are quite similar, but the role of the quality assurance department differs.

The department of quality assurance of Saxion has a control, support and advisory function. It gives requested and non-requested advice to the study programmes. The framework and requirements that must be fulfilled by the schools are set up by the department of quality assurance. Besides, the schools decide on their own how they want to organise it. The department of quality assurance has a line responsibility to the Board of Directors.

In Windesheim only requested advice can be given by the department of quality assurance. This department does not have a clear control function in the direction of the schools. Windesheim has developed different frameworks the schools could use to organise their internal quality assurance, but this is not compulsory. The department of quality assurance has no insight in which framework the schools are using, if and how (structural) their internal quality assurance is organised. There is certainly no line responsibility.

The internal quality assurance by the HvA is decentral organised. The department of quality assurance writes reports and gives advice to the Executive Board. Their advisory function to the study programmes is very small, and they do not have a control function in that direction. The moment of control takes place through the agreement between the Executive Board and the directors of the domains.

The main difference in the organisational structure between Saxion, Windesheim and the HvA is that the department of quality assurance of Saxion and Windesheim work more top down, in the direction of and in (close) contact with the study programmes, there were the department of quality assurance of the HvA works more bottom up in the direction of the higher management. In other words, the HvA has a line responsibility of the internal quality assurance, but the department of quality assurance is not involved in it.

Machinery of consulting
The communication between the different departments of quality assurance are organised differently by the three universities of applied science. The biggest difference can be found in the frequency and the level at which the meetings are taking place.

Saxion has three formal and regular organised consultation moments between the different layers in the organisation. The outcome of the meetings between the academies and the Board of Supervisors are presented in the meetings between the support services and the Board of Supervisors and vice versa. The outcomes of the consultation the quality assurance staff members of the academies, the support services and DOK are also discussed with the Board of Supervisors.

Windesheim has no formal consultation meetings; if a meeting is taking place, it is not on a regular basis. Due to this, the different layers in the organisation, including the department of quality assurance, does not have any notion on how the internal quality assurance is organised by the (other) schools. Currently Windesheim is developing a new policy. This policy must lead to more formal meetings on a more regular base.

The quality assurance department and other staff services of the HvA have regular contact with the Executive Board. During those meeting the staff services give the Executive Board advice on their

policy. Feedback on the internal quality assurance of the domains takes place between the director of the domain and the Executive Board. The department of quality assurance is not directly involved in it. Another meeting, the network meeting about the internal quality assurance takes place on a regular basis and is about the internal quality assurance HvA broad. In other words, the department of quality assurance does not know what is happening in the domains and how the study programmes have implemented their internal quality assurance system.

Internal quality assurance processes
The universities of applied science have all implemented internal processes to organise their internal quality assurance (structurally). A few similar processes are used, for example Saxion and Windesheim are using the INK-model as a supporting model for organising their internal quality assurance. Still, some differences in the organisation of internal quality assurance occur.

Saxion uses the P&C cycle and an quality assurance cycle. The latest exists of the internal audit and the accreditation. They combined the NVAO aspects with the INK-model to create a decent framework for quality improvement. The academies may decide on how they want to implement the P&C cycle and quality assurance cycle, as long as they fulfil the centrally decided requirements and procedures.

Windesheim uses ‘quality cards’, comprises the WOS, the NVAO aspects and the INK-model, the manual ‘quality of assessment’ and internal audits. The schools are not obligatory to use the ‘quality card’ and/or the manual ‘quality of assessment’. The internal audit is obligatory, it takes on the level of the schools and not on the level of the study programmes. That makes it difficult to use the internal audit as a basis for the self-evaluation. At the moment the internal quality process is not fully and structural implemented in the daily work processes of Windesheim.

The HvA has three connected quality cycles. First, the internal audits which have an focus on the process of education, the improvements that needs to be made to fulfil the accreditation aspects and the internal motivation of the study programme to deliver the best possible result. The outcome is the basis for the self-evaluation. Next, the P&C cycle which leads to an R&A plan. The R&A plan results in goals and policy for improvement. Those goals are set down in a contract between the directors of the domain and the Executive Board. The third cycle is the ‘onderzoekshuis’ which evaluates the perspective of the stakeholders. The INK-model is not a part of the structure of the HvA. Less is known about the implementation of the internal quality assurance in the domains, but currently it is not a continuous process in most domains.

In general, the organisation of the internal quality assurance is determined well enough. But some comments and improvements could be made. Windesheim and the HvA does not have a clear overview about the implementation of the framework. This is caused by the absence of the control function of the departments of quality assurance. All universities of applied science are working on policies for their internal quality assurance. But, it seems to be difficult to embed the internal quality assurance on a structural and continuous way in the organisation.

6 Experienced costs

6.1 Introduction

The second part of the main research question is about the experienced costs for accreditation according to the universities of applied science. This chapter shall describe those experiences and finally connect the outcomes of the case-studies on the organisation of the internal quality assurance with the experienced costs for accreditation. This will result in an answer on sub-questions four and five. But first, an overview will be given on what is found in (evaluation) reports about the costs of the accreditation system. This information will place the conclusions in a broader context and show that not all costs are returning costs, since some of the costs comprise only the start-up costs for the system.

We can conclude that the costs for external quality assurance have doubled compared to the Dutch system of quality assurance prior to 2003 (Onderwijsinspectie 2005c). The extra costs are caused by costs made outside the organisation (resulting in 'direct costs') and costs made inside the organisation.

First, let us look at the different types of costs made outside the professional higher education institutions. First, there are costs made for the establishment of the NVAO. According to the WHW article 5a.6 the Ministry of OCW pays part of the costs, but the other part is paid for by the higher education institutions. Secondly, before 2002 quality assurance in the professional higher education institutions was one of the tasks of the hbo-council. Nowadays, the visits are executed by the VBI. The costs to run a VBI as an independent organisation are much higher than the expenditures for the hbo-council (which was subsidised by the government to build up quality assurance capacity in the sector). Finally, the costs for the panel during the site-visits have increased. Earlier the panel members saw it as a duty to the higher education sector to judge the quality of study programmes. They received no compensation or a small fee for taking part in a site-visit. By comparison, the VBIs are commercial companies, and the panel members ask for a market-conform payment (Douma 2004, p13).

Secondly, the paper examines the different costs made inside the higher education institutions. First, accreditation is mainly about proving that the study programme meets all requirements for the minimum level of quality. Therefore, a lot of aspects inside the institutions must be formalised, including a lot of aspects that until then were arranged informally. Next, the NVAO has strict requirements for the evaluation reports of the VBIs. To avoid problems, the VBIs set stricter requirements than the NVAO for the self-evaluation reports of the higher education institutions, which results in a more intense preparation phase for the higher education institutions for the site-visit of the VBI (Douma 2004, p13). Thirdly, the legal effects of a negative accreditation decision cause the intensification as well. The threat of negative effects leads many professional higher education institutions to set the standard for their internal quality higher than required by law (Onderwijsinspectie 2005c, p44). Those costs and the extra amount of work resulting from these three factors may not be used for the calculation of the total costs for the accreditation system, because this is a choice of the professional higher education institutions itself ('indirect costs').

The costs made inside the higher education institution can be allocated to activities only for internal quality assurance and activities only for accreditation. The differences between those two are not taken into account when considering the experienced costs, because the literature does not discuss this fact in-depth and the allocation can differ between the professional higher education institutions.

6.2 Experienced costs for accreditation

In line with the research question, the respondents, an expert of the quality assurance department in each of the 3 professional higher education institutions, were asked for their opinion about the costs of the accreditation system. Therefore, the information on the experienced costs according to the three cases consists of the outcomes of the interviews. In addition it consists of information found in the reports of the institution and of what I witnessed during my visit. In line with their function, the respondents knew what was going on in their institution and indeed, which topics would be discussed. Therefore, one can assume that the opinion of the respondent can be generalised to the rest of the institution. The respondents were asked also if the extra costs were worth it, compared to the goals and outcomes of the accreditation system. In order to increase the readability, few quotes will be used. In addition, the institution will be the studied subject instead of the expert of quality assurance. The outcome of the interviews will follow the structure of the rest of the report.

6.2.1 Saxion

According to Saxion, accreditation is part of the process which is necessary to organise the (internal) organisation. The quality assurance expert mentioned; 'the work is worth all the effort and money in order to form a picture of (the quality of) the study programme and the higher education organisation' and 'it is unfair that the accreditation is being blamed for the chaos some institutions make of the organisation of the internal quality assurance'. Saxion therefore seems to express that if those other institutions had organised their internal quality assurance in a more structural way, they would experience accreditation less as a 'burden'.

The disadvantage of the accreditation system, in their eyes, is that the amount of work increases in the period before the site-visit of the VBI. The organisation and the study programmes must be made transparent by writing the self-evaluation. This extra work gives organisations the idea that they must do it for another and not for themselves.

Saxion has a structural internal quality assurance system, therefore one can say that Saxion has a strong internal motivation to organise an internal quality system. Before 2002 they already started with the development of an internal quality assurance system, the European and national rules on accreditation only speeded this process up. The (structural) way of how Saxion have organised their internal quality assurance does not make accreditation feel as a 'burden'.

6.2.2 Windesheim

The implementation of the accreditation system in Windesheim started after the European and national implementation of the accreditation system. If there would not be such a nationwide system, Windesheim would organise its internal quality assurance system differently, particularly a less broad structure.

After eight years of this new system, the largest problem is that the activities are not embedded in the daily management processes. Some employees, including the management, asked; 'why should we work really hard every six years to satisfy other people?' This means that employees do not feel genuinely connected to the purpose of the accreditation system, and hence do not structurally fill in their evaluation forms and other necessities for the accreditation. This results in a lot of extra work during the months before the accreditation, which is not helping to get the internal quality assurance system accepted in the organisation. All of the aforementioned does not mean that there is no internal motivation, but it does mean that this motivation is not easily visible in all layers of the organisation. When not everyone is fully committed, the implementation is bound to take extra effort.

The quality assurance department estimated the increasing costs since the implementation of the accreditation system. The accreditation of the study programmes costs every school approximately €30,000. Part of these costs exists of the starting up costs of the system. The problem with the remaining costs is that it is not visible if those costs need to be allocated completely to the accreditation or whether some costs belong to the daily management processes. At the moment all effort for quality assurance seems to be attributed to the accreditation process.

6.2.3 HvA

The respondent mentioned that the HvA thinks relatively lightly about the costs for accreditation, because it is their vision that quality assurance systems must be seen as a part of the professional organisation. Quality assurance systems measure whether the organisational goals are reached, information which is important for the development of new policies and the level of efficiency in the organisation. From this perspective one can conclude that the HvA has an internal motivation to implement a structural quality assurance system. Nevertheless, the respondents said it is sometimes frustrating how much time the internal quality assurance and the preparation for the site-visit cost. For a certain period of time several employees cannot work on their regular daily tasks, for they are preoccupied with the self-evaluation and related activities. Moreover, the amount of money which must be paid to the VBIs is experienced as too high. Those two points create a more negative view about the costs of the accreditation system.

6.3 Connections among organisation, internal quality assurance and experienced costs for accreditation

The experienced costs differ across the three professional higher education institutions. In general, Saxion has experienced the costs for accreditation as low in comparison to the other cases. Their opinion is that it is worth all the effort to form a picture of the study programmes, which should be done also without accreditation. Windesheim experienced the costs and the amount of work as high compared to the others. The experiences of the HvA fits between those two; on the one hand they have a strong internal motivation and find the costs acceptable, on the other hand it frustrates employees that the time invested does not correspond with the outcome of accreditation.

Between the cases there are also differences and similarities in the structure of their internal quality assurance systems (see chapter 5.2.4). On the whole, Saxion has a structural internal quality assurance system with a transparent structure and regular consulting hours. The employees in the academies work regularly on their activities for the internal quality assurance, so Saxion has less extra work for the preparation of the site-visit. The organisation by Windesheim is currently not completely transparent and structural; it is not visible how the internal quality assurance is organised within the schools and the activities for quality assurance are not embedded in the daily management processes. Next, the communication between the different layers is taken place on a non-regular basis. The HvA has a different structure than the previous two, it is more decentrally organised. The control function on internal quality assurance system appears during the meeting between the department of quality assurance and the Executive Board and between the director of the domain and the Executive Board. The department of quality assurance has therefore less insight in how the domains have implemented the internal quality assurance and what their experiences with the accreditation system are. In table 1 the outcomes on the organisational structure and the experienced costs for accreditation are combined.

Table 1; Organisation of internal quality assurance and the experienced costs combined

Case	Organisation internal quality assurance	Experienced costs
Saxion	Centralised, structured and transparent	Low
HvA	Decentralised, structured and partly transparent	Partly low, partly high
Windesheim	Centralised, less structured and partly transparent	High

If the internal quality assurance is more structurally organised, the cost for the accreditation are experienced as low in comparison to the other cases. If an institution has a less structured internal quality assurance system, the costs for accreditation are experienced as high compared with the others. This idea leads back to the internal motivation of the professional higher education institutions; a strong internal motivation to develop an internal quality assurance system leads to a better organised system, which ensures that accreditation feels less like a 'burden'. A structural system can be reached through implementation of the accreditation system in the daily work processes.

In the case of the HvA the internal quality assurance system differs between the domains, and since there is less contact between the employees of the domains neither for the department of quality assurance nor for the domains, does it become visible how the different institutions organise their internal quality assurance. This resulted in a lack in transparency of the structure of internal quality assurance. The absence of a line relationship between the department of quality assurance and the domains increases the lack in transparency even more. Therefore, transparency and structure are connected to each other. This argument becomes stronger since Saxion has a structured and transparent structure. This department has a support and control function in the direction of the academies, they know what is going on in those academies. So, here transparency is caused by the (centralised) structure. That does not mean that lack of transparency is caused by a decentralised structure, as Windesheim is centralised organised and lacks in transparency. In a decentralised structure transparency could be reached through regular communication and sharing best practices. Concluding, a well-structured organisation, which can be a centralised as well as a decentralised organisation, correlates with transparency and with the experienced costs of accreditation.

One final comment that must be made here, is that support from all employees is necessary to lower the negative experience of accreditation[2]. It is important to make the employees aware of the importance of quality assurance in an organisation. Establishing a quality culture is an alternative way to achieve well-structured quality assurance.

[2] Motivated employees are a part of the quality culture in the organisation. Quality culture refers to an organisational culture that intends to enhance quality permanently and is characterised by two distinct elements: on the one hand, a cultural/psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitment towards quality and, on the other hand, a structural/managerial element with defined processes that enhance quality and aim at coordinating individual efforts. Thus, the cultural/psychological element refers back to individual staff members while the structural/managerial refers back to the institution (EUA 2006, p10). In order to embed a quality culture in an organisation and make it operational several factors have been identified. These factors include the structures of the organisation as well as processes and procedures related to quality culture. In any case, a crucial factor and indeed the starting point of the development of a quality culture is the mission of the institution. A mission reflecting clear institutional priorities helps the institution to develop a strategy for quality culture and to embed it (EUA 2006, p11).

7 Conclusions

This chapter will provide the conclusions of the thesis and give an answer to the research question. Additionally this chapter will provide a reflection on the reliability of the results and a recommendation in respect to further research. First, we will look back to the background, objective and research method of this study.

One of the latest reforms in higher education is the implementation of the Bologna Declaration. This led to the introduction of a tiered system of programmes and degrees in more than 40 European countries intending to produce a higher degree of compatibility and comparability of higher education systems (Kehm and Teichler 2006, p270). This system is commonly called the 'bachelor-master (degree) system'.

The introduction of a more convergent degree system would lead immediately to a need for comparable quality standards and, according to many experts, for the setting of minimum standards or requirements for the envisaged degree levels (Kehm and Teichler 2006, p270). Degrees can be best compared if there is a system guaranteeing the quality of the different study programmes. That is why the introduction of the bachelor-master's degree system and the aim of European countries to achieve a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) have given external quality assurance an extra dimension (NVAO 2007a, p7). In the Netherlands the adaptation of the system of quality assurance to the Bologna process requirements is called 'accreditation'.

Accreditation is a formal, published statement regarding the quality of an institution or a programme, following a (cyclical) evaluation based on agreed standards. It delivers for a period of six years a quality mark to institutions and study programmes in the Netherlands (Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003, p15). This recognition leads to important legal effects (Kwikkers, Van Damme et al. 2003, p18). It gives permission to institutions to offer education, but it is also a mechanism for the government to give an institution or education access to the higher education market within the boundaries of the law.

In order to fulfil all requirements of the accreditation system many higher education institutions have an internal quality assurance system. Some institutions had implemented such a system already before the implementation of the accreditation system, others implemented the system after the nationwide implementation. The internal quality systems are often based on quality models, like the INK-model, which give some structure to the system. In this paper internal quality assurance is focused on all internal activities professional higher education institution must obtain in order to get and keep the accreditation. This insight in the accreditation system and meaning and implementation of internal quality assurance was necessary before the structure of the system could be understood. Therefore the system of (internal) quality assurance is analysed in chapter four.

The Inspectorate of Education has written an evaluation report on the implementation of the accreditation system (Onderwijsinspectie 2005c). They found out that the increased costs and the increased level of work were experienced by most people as the biggest problem in the current accreditation system.

The increased costs, compared to the pre-2003 quality assurance system, are caused by the payments the higher education institutions have to make to the NVAO and VBI (the direct costs) and all the other activities higher education institutions must maintain internally to get and keep their accreditation (the indirect costs). The way the higher education institutions organise their internal quality assurance plays a role in this respect. Using this perspective, it is interesting to investigate the matter of how higher education institutions organise their internal quality assurance and whether that structure affects the experienced costs. That resulted in the following research question;

What are the effects of the structure of internal quality assurance for the experiences of costs of the accreditation system in Dutch universities of applied science?

In order to achieve an unbiased answer on the research question, five sub-questions are formulated. By answering these sub-questions one should arrive at the overall answer to the research question.

- *What are the organisational structures of universities of applied science?*
- *What does internal quality assurance mean and how is it implemented in the Netherlands?*
- *How do universities of applied science organise their internal quality assurance?*
- *How do the universities of applied science experience the costs of the accreditation system?*
- *What is the relationship between the experiences of the costs and the structure of the internal quality assurance system?*

Only professional higher education institutions were part of the research population. In order to increase the validity, three institutions of different kinds were investigated. The sizes of those institutions are in the same range, which makes a comparison between the institutions more reliable. The definition of the research population, the research method and an operationalisation of the concepts also took place in chapter three. The research design, and especially the design of the topic list for the interviews were important to get adequate information from the respondents to find an answer on the last three sub-questions. The topic list is based on the theoretical approaches mentioned in chapters two and four.

The insights of chapters two and four are used to set up a framework for the interviews and a framework for the results and analysis. More precisely, the theories about organisational structures and the literature about quality assurance are used as a control instrument; 'are all aspects of the organisation covered during the interviews and development of the outcomes?' The discussed theories are; Keuning and Eppink's view on organisational structures, Mintzbergs' professional bureaucracy, the INK-model as a quality model and the self-evaluation requirements from the NVAO. All previous chapters were leading to an answer on the main research question. The answer on that question is discussed below.

7.1 Research question

The increased costs of the accreditation system are caused by direct and indirect costs. The direct costs are the payments to the NVAO and VBIs. Indirect costs are the costs for the internal quality assurance system and the additional costs for accreditation. In other words, indirect costs comprise the amount of work the institutions must achieve in order to get and keep their accreditation. For the purpose of this study, the focus is mainly about the indirect costs, especially on how the professional higher education institutions organise their internal quality assurance system and how this structure affects the experiences of the costs for the accreditation system.

The three cases, Saxion, Windesheim and the HvA, are differently organised. Saxion has a centralised, well-structured and transparent organisation of their internal quality assurance system. The department of quality assurance is centrally placed in the organisation and has both a supporting and controlling role. Next, there is regularly contact between the academies, the management and the department of quality assurance. The organisation within Windesheim is centralised, less structural, and partly transparent. The accreditation is not embedded in the daily work processes, the schools use different formats for the self-evaluation and there is no regular contact between the schools and the department of quality assurance. The department of quality assurance can only act on request of the schools. Concluding, the schools as well as the department of quality assurance does not have an

overview on how the internal quality assurance is organised by every school. The HvA is decentrally organised, structured and partly transparent. Their main (advising) function of the department of quality assurance is in the direction of the Executive Board and not in the direction of the domains. There is no institutional broad manual for the structure of quality assurance, all domains are responsible for their own quality assurance system. The role of the department of quality assurance and the absence of regular consulting results in an unclear overview of the different systems and level of implementation in the domains, it decreases the transparency. Quality assurance is to some extent embedded in the daily work processes, although substantial additional effort must be made for self-evaluations.

The experienced costs for the accreditation system also showed some differences between the cases. Saxion experience the costs of accreditation as low; the input in the system is worth all the effort, because quality assurance is important for all, including higher education institutions. The HvA experience the costs as partly low, quality is something that belongs to the professional higher education institution. On the other side, the payments to the VBIs and the amount of work for the self-evaluation are experienced as too high. Finally, the experienced costs at Windesheim are mainly high; the input in terms of amount of money and work does not correspond with the outcome of accreditation. The organisation structures of internal quality assurance and the experienced costs are combined in the table.

Table; Organisation internal quality assurance and the experienced costs combined

Case	**Organisation internal quality assurance**	**Experienced costs**
Saxion	Centralised, structured and transparent	Low
HvA	Decentralised, structured and partly Transparent	Partly low, partly high
Windesheim	Centralised, less structured and partly Transparent	High

Both Saxion and the HvA are structurally organised and experience the costs for the accreditation as low compared to the others. We can conclude that the table proves the idea that the more the internal quality assurance is structural, systematic and transparently organised, the less extra work the accreditation (especially the self-evaluation and preparation for the site-visit) costs. This results in lower experienced costs for accreditation than the institutions which have a less structurally organised internal quality assurance system. Those institutions, in this case Windesheim, experienced higher amount of costs in comparison to the other cases.

This conclusion is already an answer to the research question; '*What are the effects of the structure of internal quality assurance for the experiences of costs of the accreditation system in Dutch universities of applied science?*' If the internal quality assurance is more structurally organised, the cost for the accreditation are experienced as low in comparison to the other cases. If an institution has a less structured internal quality assurance system, the costs for accreditation are experienced as high compared with the others. The problem with a less structured organisation starts with the problem of lack of internal motivation to implement a well-structured system. A well-structured system includes: transparency about structure, regulation, role of the quality assurance department and regular consulting.

Changing the internal motivation of an organisation is difficult, therefore more practical policies must be changed first. In order to decrease the experienced costs, the internal quality assurance should be organised in a more structural and transparent way. Transparency increases when it becomes clear for all employees how the internal quality assurance is arranged and how the departments have implemented their quality assurance. To reach this, two policies should change; 1) it is important that

the institutions create more similarity in the implementation of quality systems between their departments. This means, that all departments must obligatory use a similar format for their internal quality assurance. This, for clarification's sake, must be arranged inside the educational institutions and not by the Ministry. This similar format does not mean a complete structured model, but rather a framework on how the information must be delivered, which requirements must be fulfilled and how often this must be done. A complete structured format will not fit the professionals, since they are working rather autonomous and 2) more often and regular contact between the department of quality assurance and the study programmes. This will result in more clarity for all involved parties on how the quality assurance is arranged by the different study programmes. Problems and experiences can also be discussed during those meetings. Besides, this could support and stimulate the departments to create a well-structured system, because their results became visible for the rest of the organisation. A combination of both policies will increase the transparency, and indirectly the structure, of the internal quality assurance.

The current system of quality assurance became mandatory for all higher education institutions since the implementation of accreditation in 2002. That obligation resulted in the experience that higher education institutions must assure the quality of their study programmes for 'others' (NVAO and VBIs) instead of doing it for their own benefit only. Implementing an internal quality assurance system from their internal motivation could change the negative feeling around accreditation: one should make quality assurance a part of the regular institutional quality structure and 'quality culture'. In the 'quality culture' of educational institutions it is necessary that employees are motivated to embed the activities for the quality assurance system into their daily tasks. One example is; if an institution wants to be sure of reaching a certain level of quality, they must implement a system to judge that quality. The accreditation system is working from the same perspective. The biggest difference is that the self-evaluation for the NVAO is more encompassing than the evaluation the higher education institutions would make for their internal use. That means that not the whole self-evaluation must be allocated to the accreditation, only the part that the institution would not do if there was no accreditation. There is an overlap in a lot of the elements for internal and external quality assurance. A structured internal quality assurance system will allocate more elements to internal quality assurance and fewer to the accreditation system. Therefore, for employees it will feel that more activities must be done for their own organisation and not for 'an other organisation', which will ensure that accreditation will feel less like a 'burden.

Finally, a quick look forward to the 'second round' of accreditation, which will support lower experienced costs. One of the changes in the 'second round' is the division of the current accreditation into an institutional audit and a (light touch) programme accreditation. Once the outcome on the institutional audit is positive, the accreditation for the study programmes comprises less work. Therefore the preparation of the site-visit will take less time, which results in lower experienced costs for accreditation.

As aforementioned, this study showed that the high experienced costs are not only caused by external factors, but also derive from internal factors. Those internal factors are partly caused by the way professional higher education institutions organise their internal quality assurance system. In other words, the professional higher education institutions can do something internally to decrease the indirect costs, and because of that the high experienced costs. It is hoped that this awareness will change the ideas about the importance of a well-structured and well-embedded internal quality assurance system, which results in improvements of the internal quality assurance systems. The cases mentioned in this study could take a supporting role in those improvements.

7.2 Reflection and further research

7.2.1 Reflection on results

In this section some issues and limitations will be discussed. First, the literature about this subject. The literature about quality assurance focuses mainly on the different quality assurance models in the different countries. There was little empirical information about quality assurance models in professional higher education institutions in the Netherlands. The information about the Dutch accreditation system exists of a description of the system as it ought to work and evaluations about the implementation of the accreditation system from the national perspective. The topic of the structure of internal quality assurance was even less well described. Therefore a good theoretical framework about the structure of professional higher education institutions became more important. The theoretical framework is used to build a valuable topic list and a framework for the analysis. This framework made it possible to cover all the aspects of the structure, organisation and experiences around the (internal) quality assurance system. The 'control points' combined with open and objective questions decreases the change on social desirable answers, it led to a more trustworthy reproduction of the reality.

The cases differed on independent variables, which made it worthwhile comparing them. At the same time, they were fairly similar on other, control, variables (such as size), which made it possible to compare them. The outcomes are not directly applicable to the research universities, because they must fulfil other requirements and the role of the professional is different, more autonomous, in research universities. Finally, professional higher educations which differ on the control variables, for instance, those which do not have the same size as the cases, still would rather have the similar outcomes. Well-structured, transparency and even 'quality culture' are abstract variables that connect to and are important in every professional higher education institution. The operational ways to achieve these abstract variables may differ. For example, in smaller and less complex higher education institutions there are fewer units, shorter communications lines etcetera, which make transparency a less challenging goal than in very large and complex institutions.

7.2.2 Further research

Particular experiences, particularly the negative ones, of the accreditation system can change when people become increasingly aware of the benefit of measuring quality assurance in higher education. Of course, this subject must be considered in a cost/benefit perspective. It would be interesting to measure quantitatively the total costs of the accreditation system and combine this with the way professional higher education institutions attribute their activities to accreditation and/or internal quality assurance. In order to reach a high level of validity it is important that a larger number of professional higher education institutions can be found to participate in a forthcoming study. This research may one day be considered the modest pilot-study on which future assurance of the accreditation system was built.

References

Answers.com (2010). "Decentralization." Retrieved 23th of February, 2010, from http://www.answers.com/topic/decentralization.

Babbie, E. (2004). The practice of social research. Belmont, USA, Wadsworth/ Thomson Learning.

Bacheloropleidingen.nl (2009a). "Instellingen; Windesheim Zwolle." Retrieved 1 July 2009, from http://www.bacheloropleidingen.nl/instellingen/15/hogeschool-windesheim-zwolle/.

Bacheloropleidingen.nl (2009b). "Instellingen; Hogeschool van Amsterdam." Retrieved 1 July 2009, from <http://www.bacheloropleidingen.nl/instellingen/176/hogeschool-van-amsterdam/>.

Besturenraad (2009). "Windesheim en Vrije Universiteit uit elkaar." Retrieved 8 June 2009, from www.besturenraad.nl/main_1-4-1-8.html <http://www.besturenraad.nl/main_1-4-1-8.html>.

Carnoy, M. (2001). The Role of the State in the New Global Economy. Challenges of Globalisation. South African Debates with Manuals Castells. J. Muller, N. Cloete and S. Badat. Cape Town, Center for Higher Education Transformations: pp22-34.

CBS (2008). "Regulier onderwijs, leerlingen naar instellingsgrootte." Retrieved 9 July 2009, from http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=03753&D1=a&D2=1-2,6,8-9,13,(l-2)-l&D3=0-2&D4=0&D5=a,!0-9&HD=090709-1128&HDR=T,G3,G4&STB=G2,G1.

Commissie Rinnooy-Kan (2000). Advies ter inzake de invoering van een bachelor-master systeem in het Nederlands hoger onderwijs. Den Haag, Onderwijsraad.

Csizmadia, T. (2006). Quality Management ini Hungarian Higher Education; Organisational responses to governmental policy. Enschede, CHEPS/ UT.

Dicks, T., M. Meesters, et al. (2005). De school als moderne arbeidsorganisatie: onderzoek naar de mogelijkheden en consequences van de inzet van ICT in de school. Deel 1: Conceptueel kader. Den Haag, ZENC.

Douma, T. (2004). Accreditatie een (zelf)diagnose. Den Haag, Sdu Uitgevers.

ENQA (2009). Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Helsinki, ENQA.

Goedegebuure, L., M. Jeliazkova, et al. (2002). Alle begin is moeilijk: Evaluatie van de proefaccreditering HBO. Enschede CHEPS.

Green, D. (1994). What is Quality in Higher Education? Concepts, Polict and Practice. What is Quality in Higher Education? D. Green. Buckingham, Open University Press: 3-20.

Harvey, L. (2003). The Power of Accreditation: views of academics. ENQA workshop on accreditation models in higher education. Rome.

Harvey, L. and D. Green (1993). "Defining Quality." Assessment and evaluation in higher education **18**(1): 9-34.

hbo-raad (2005). "Zorgen over toename bureaucratie: kosten accreditatie verdubbeld." Retrieved 26 Octobre, 2009, from www.hbo-raad.nl/onderwijs/313.

HvA (2007). Jaarverslag 2006. Amsterdam, Hogeschool van Amsterdam.

HvA (2008). Jaarverslag 2007. Amsterdam, Hogeschool van Amsterdam.

HvA (2009). "Alle opleidingen van de Hogeschool van Amsterdam." Retrieved 1 July 2009, from www.hva.nl/opleidingen.

IIEP (2006). Module 1: Making choices for external quality assurance systems. External quality assurance: options for higher education managers. Paris, UNESO, IIEP.

INK (2009). INK in de kern, informatieborchure. Zaltbommel, INK.

Jeliazkova, M. and D. F. Westerheijden (2004). The Netherlands: A leader in quality assurance follows the accreditation trend. Accreditation and evaluation in the European Higher Education Area. S. Schwarz and D. F. Westerheijden. Dordrecht, Springer**:** 323-345.

Kehm, B. M. and U. Teichler (2006). "Which direction for bachelor and master programmes? A stocktaking of the Bologna process." Tertiary Education Management **12**: 269-282.

Kells, H. R. (1992). Self-Regulation in Higher Education: A Multi-National Perspective on Collaborative Systems of Quality Assurance and Control. London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Kenloo (2009). "Over Kenloo." Retrieved 1 July 2009, from <http://www.kenloo.nl/6/over_kenloo.html>.

Keuning, D. and D. J. Eppink (2000). Management en Organisatie: Theorie en Toepassing. Groningen, Stenfert Kroese.

Kovač, A., H. Vossensteyn, et al. (2009). Internationalisation with Professionalisation in Higher Education Management. Enschede, CHE-CHEPS-ESMU.

Kwikkers, P., D. Van Damme, et al. (2003). Accreditatie in het hoger onderwijs: achtergrond en praktijk in Nederland en Vlaanderen. Den Haag, SDU Uitgevers.

Martin, M. and A. Stella (2007). External quality assurance in higher education: making choices. Paris, UNESCO.

Merriam-Webster (2009). "Definition 'Costs'." Retrieved 28 September 2009, from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cost.

Min OCW (2005). Stroomlijnen accreditatie. Den Haag, Ministerie Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap.

Min OCW (2008a). Bijlage A; Focus op kwaliteit: verniewing van accreditatie in het hoger onderwijs. Den Haag, Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap.

Min OCW (2009a). Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek. Min OCW. Den Haag. **BWBR0005682**.

Min OCW (2009b). Brief TK: aanpassingen accreditatie hoger onderwijs. Den Haag Min OCW.

Mintzberg, H. (1979). The structuring of organizations: a synthesis of the research. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall.

Nobiles (2009). "Mastermatch: vind de juiste master!". Retrieved 6 October 2009, from http://www.nobiles.nl/masterregister.

Nuffic (2007). Higher education in the Netherlands: the system, institutions and degrees. Den Haag, Nuffic.

NVAO (2007a). Part 1; Report of the committee for the review of the Accreditation Organization of The Netherlands and Flanders. Report of the committee for the review of the Accreditation Organization of The Netherlands and Flanders. Den Haag, NVAO

NVAO (2007b). Part 2; NVAO self-evaluation Report 2007. Report of the committee for the review of the Accreditation Organization of The Netherlands and Flanders. Den Haag, NVAO.

NVAO (2008). Kaders ten behoeve van de ontwikkeling van een nieuw accreditatiestelsel in Nederland en Vlaanderen (pilotfase). Den Haag, NVAO.

NVAO (2009a). "Mutual recognition of accreditation." Retrieved 4th of September, 2009, from http://www.nvao.net/mutual-recognition-of-accreditation.

NVAO (2009b). "Beoordeelde opleiding." Retrieved 1 July 2009, from http://www.nvao.net/beoordeelde-opleidingen/institution.

NVAO (2009c). "Quality Assurance Agencies." Retrieved 13 July, 2009, from http://www.nvao.net/quality-assurances-agencies.

NVAO (2009d). "Accreditation." Retrieved 17 July 2009, from www.nvao.net/accreditation.

NVAO (2009e). "Nieuw accreditatiestelsel." Retrieved 15 October 2009, from http://www.nvao.net/nieuw-accreditatiestelsel.

NVAO (2009f). Algemene evaluatie van de pilots voor de ontwikkeling van een nieuw accreditatiestelsel. Den Haag, NVAO.

OECD (2006). Thematic review of tertiary education; the Netherlands. Paris, OECD.

Onderwijsinspectie (2005a). Accreditatie; introductie. Utrecht, Onderwijsinspectie.

Onderwijsinspectie (2005b). Accreditatie; in een internationaal perspectief. Utrecht, Onderwijsinspectie.

Onderwijsinspectie (2005c). Accreditatie; de kosten in kaart. Utrecht, Onderwijsinspectie.

Onderwijsinspectie (2006a). Accreditatie; in werking. Utrecht, Onderwijsinspectie.

Onderwijsinspectie (2009). Accreditatie nieuwe stijl; evaluatie van een nieuw accreditatiestelsel in Nederland en Vlaanderen. Utrecht, Onderwijsinspectie.

Pijl, O. J. (2009). "Accreditatie onderwijs." Retrieved 15 July 2009, from http://www.2reflect.nl/accreditatie.htm.

Polderman, J. and W. Sirre (2005). Een kwaliteitshandboek schrijven. Den Haag, Q*Primair.

Qompas (2009). "Onderwijsinstelling en opleidingen." Retrieved 1 July 2009, from <http://studeren.qompas.nl/onderwijsinstelling.html?ois=64&pakid=38>

Robbins, S. P. (1983). Organization Theory: The structure and design of organization. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall.

Saryusz-Wolski, T., E. Chojnacka, et al. (1997). Some concepts of education quality improvement. Warsaw, Technical University of Lódz.

Saxion (2008). Jaarverslag 2008, deel A. Deventer, Saxion Hogescholen.

Saxion (2009a). "About Saxion: Facts and Figures." Retrieved 1 July 2009, from http://www.saxion.edu/about-saxion/.

UvA and HvA (2007). Leren excelleren; Instellingsplan 2007-2010. Amsterdam, Hogeschool van Amsterdam.

Van Kemenade, E., A. Vermeulen, et al. (2008). "Als docenten konden kiezen, kozen ze dan voor accreditatie?". Retrieved 15 May 2009, from http://hbo-kennisbank.uvt.nl/cgi/fontys/show.cgi?fid=3380

Verhoeven, N. (2007). Wat is onderzoek? Den Haag, Boom Onderwijs.

Vlăsceanu, L., L. Grünberg, et al. (2007). Quality assurance and accreditation. A glossary of basic terms and definitions. Bucharest, UNESCO-CEPES.

Vossensteyn, J. J. (2005). Perceptions of student price-responsiveness. Enschede, CHEPS/UT.

Vroeijenstein, T. I. (1991). External quality assessment: Servan of two masters? Conference of quality assurance in higher education. Hong Kong.

VVS (2008). Standpunt Accreditatie tweede ronde. Brussel, Vlaamse Vereniging van Studenten.

Weick, K. E. (1976). "Educational Organization as Loosely Coupled Systems." Administrative Science Quarterly **21**(1): 1-19.

Westerheijden, D. F. (2008). What can we do with industrial quality assurance models in higher education? 'Common Knowledge. Perspectives on knowledge in the knwoledge society'. Nijmegen, CHEPS.

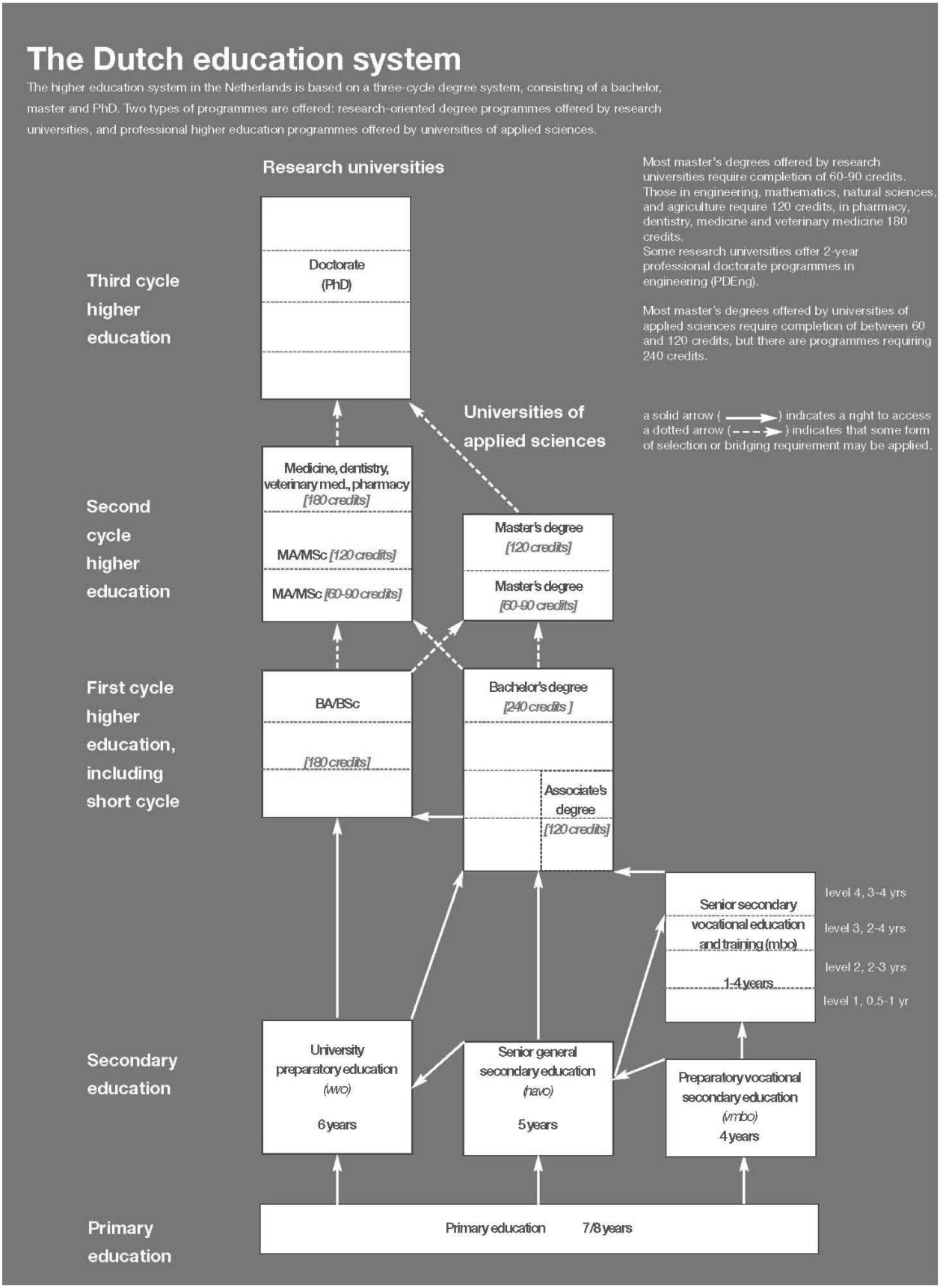
Westerheijden, D. F., L. Cremonini, et al. (2008). New degrees in the Netherlands. Enschede, CHEPS.

Windesheim (2007). Jaarverslag 2007. Zwolle, Christelijke Hogeschool Windesheim.

Appendices

1) Diagram Dutch education system
2) Model Van Kemenade and Schaik – INK-model and NVAO elements combined
3) Topic list send to respondents
4) Topic list during interviews
5) Nederlandse samenvatting

Appendix 1; Diagram Dutch education system



Appendix 2; Model Van Kemenade and Schaik – INK-model and NVAO elements combined

Aandachtsgebieden en deelaspecten INK	Beoordelingskader en facetten NVAO
1. Leiderschap	
1.1. Visie op kwaliteit	
1.2. Persoonlijke betrokkenheid	
1.3. Signaleren, waarderen en ondersteunen van kwaliteit	
1.4. Extern optreden	
1.5. Reflectie op eigen handelen	
2. Beleid en strategie	**5. Interne kwaliteitszorg**
2.1. Beleidsplannen en documenten	
2.2. Ontwikkelen van beleid	
2.3. Communicatie over beleid	
2.4. Toetsing en verbetering	Evaluatie resultaten Maatregelen ter verbetering
3. Personeelsmanagement	**3. Inzet van personeel**
3.1. Personeelsbeleid	Eisen HBO
3.2. Personeelsplanning	Kwantiteit personeel
3.3. Feedback, beoordeling en beloning	Kwaliteit personeel
3.4. Personeelszorg	
3.5. Begeleiding en ontwikkeling van medewerkers	
3.6. Toetsing en verbetering	
4. Middelenmanagement	**4.Voorzieningen**
4.1. Informatie	
4.2. Financiële middelen	
4.3. Materiële middelen	Materiële voorzieningen
4.4. Technologie	
4.5. Kennis en ervaring	
4.6. Toetsing en verbetering	
5. Management van processen	**1.Doelstelling opleiding** **2.Programma** **4.Voorzieningen**
5.1. Beroepsbeeld, opleidingstermen en onderwijsvisie	1. Domeinspecifieke eisen 1. Niveau HBO 1. Oriëntatie HBO bachelor
5.2. Curriculum	2. Eisen HBO 2. Relatie doelstellingen en inhoud programma 2. Duur
5.3. Studieonderdelen	2. Samenhang in opleidingsprogramma
5.4. Onderwerpen van toetsing	2. Beoordeling en toetsing
5.5. Regie	2. Afstemming tussen vormgeving en inhoud
5.6. Ontwerpen van de leeromgeving	
5.7. Studentactiviteiten	2. Studielast
5.8. Docentactiviteiten	
5.9. Acquireren (verkrijgen/verwerven)	2. Instroom
5.10. Studieloopbaanbegeleiding	4. Studiebegeleiding
6. Waardering door klanten	**5. Interne kwaliteitszorg**
6.1. Studenten	Evaluatie resultaten Maatregelen ter verbetering
6.2. Werkveld	Studenten
6.3. Overheid	Beroepenveld en alumni
7. Waardering door personeel	**5. Interne kwaliteitszorg**
	Evaluatie resultaten Maatregelen ter verbetering
8. Waardering door maatschappij	
9. Eindresultaten	**6. Resultaten**
9.1. Financiële	
9.2. Operationele	Onderwijsrendement
	Gerealiseerd niveau

Appendix 3; Topic list send to respondents

Onderwerplijst interview 'interne kwaliteitszorg'

Deel 1; Organisatie kwaliteitszorg

- Kunt mij vertellen hoe jullie de interne kwaliteitsstructuur georganiseerd hebben?
    - Structuur; staf of lijn, centraal of decentraal, bottom-up of top-down
    - Verschil instelling en instituut
    - Tekenen organigram
- Koppeling maken onderwerpen INK-model – NVAO

Deel 2; Aspecten kwaliteitszorg

- Is er, volgens u, een differentiatie te maken in aspecten toe te kennen aan alleen de interne kwaliteitszorg en aspecten van de accreditatie?
- Zo ja, hoe zou u deze splitsing uitwerken?
    - Onderdelen NVAO gebruiken

Deel 3; Kosten kwaliteitszorg

- Ervaart u kwaliteitszorg als 'duur'?
- Waaraan ligt dit volgens u?

Appendix 4; Topic list during interviews

Introductie
Inleiding onderzoek
- Wie ben ik
- Wat voor onderzoek/ wat ik weten

Inleiding respondent
- Wat is uw functie?
- Wat is uw rol binnen het proces van kwaliteitszorg?
- Wat vindt u van kwaliteitszorg?

Deel 1; Organisatie kwaliteitszorg
In dit deel wil ik een beeld vormen over hoe de kwaliteitszorg binnen uw hogeschool is georganiseerd. Belangrijke aspecten voor mij zijn; de taakverdeling, de gezagsverhouding, de communicatiestructuur en hoe u de hoeveelheid werk ervaart. Voor het vormen van dit beeld heb ik gekozen om het INK-model als leidraad en ondersteuning te gebruiken. Het INK-model is een bekend model binnen het hoger onderwijs. Het ondersteunt bij het in kaart brengen van de organisatie. Binnen dit model heb ik de koppeling gemaakt met de NVAO onderwerpen voor accreditatie. Aan de hand van deze aspecten wil ik de structuur van jullie interne kwaliteitszorgsysteem in kaart brengen. Allereerst een paar algemene vragen.

1. Kunt mij vertellen hoe jullie de interne kwaliteitsstructuur georganiseerd hebben?
    - Goed verschil instelling en instituut in de gaten houden
    - Structuur; staf of lijn, centraal of decentraal, bottom-up of top-down
    - Wie doet wat? Waar zijn de taken weggezet in de organisatie?
        - Taakverdeling
        - Gezagsverhouding/ aansturing
        - Communicatiestructuur
    - Tekenen organigram

Checklist te beantwoorden vragen vanuit koppeling INK-NVAO (gaat om 'do'/ inrichting)
- Waar in de organisatie en door wie wordt de IQA bedacht?
- Wie zijn erbij betrokkenen? (intern/ extern)
- Hoe en door wie wordt de IQA manager gecontroleerd?
- Hoe loopt de communicatie?
- Hoeveel personeelsleden zijn betrokken bij IQA? Waar bevinden zij zich in de organisatie?
- Kunt u een inschatting maken hoeveel tijd de medewerkers kwijt zijn met het uitvoeren van taken voor de IQA?
- Hoe organiseren jullie de IQA technisch gezien?
- Maken jullie gebruik van een elektronisch systeem? Welke?
- Is er een koppeling tussen jullie IQA systeem en de eisen van de NVAO?
- Wat doen jullie om te voldoen aan de eisen van de NVAO?
- Evalueren jullie het IQA systeem ook? Wie, wat, waar?
- Wat zijn de reacties op jullie kwaliteitszorgsysteem vanuit de studenten/ werkveld/ docenten?
- Hoe is, volgens u, de IQA binnen deze hogeschool georganiseerd?

Deel 2; Aspecten kwaliteitszorg
Nu enkele vragen over de verschillende aspecten van de kwaliteitszorg. Door veel hogescholen worden de hoge kosten van het accreditatiesysteem als belastend ervaren. Ik ben benieuwd of deze hogeschool al deze aspecten toewijst aan de accreditatie of dat een aantal aspecten onderdeel zijn van het eigen kwaliteitszorgsysteem. Dus dat een deel van het beleid vanuit de missie en visie van de eigen organisatie komt en een deel doordat het wettelijk is voorgeschreven, is opgelegd door de NVAO.

- Is er, volgens u, een differentiatie te maken tussen de aspecten alleen voor de interne kwaliteitszorg en de aspecten alleen voor de accreditatie?
- Zo nee, waarom niet?
- Zo ja, hoe zou u deze splitsing uitwerken?
    - Onderdelen NVAO gebruiken

Deel 3; Kosten kwaliteitszorg
Uit de evaluatierapporten van Onderwijsinspectie, het Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, en de NVAO komt naar voren dat de betrokkenen het huidige accreditatiesysteem als duur ervaren. In 2010 gaat de 'tweede ronde' van de accreditatie in. Om deze invoering beter te laten verlopen heeft er afgelopen jaar een 'testronde', de zogenaamde pilot, plaatsgevonden. Uit de evaluatie hieruit bleek dat de betrokkenen de hoge kosten van het accreditatiesysteem nog steeds als een probleem ervaren. Ik ben geïnteresseerd in u mening over de kosten van de kwaliteitszorg. Daarover nu enkele vragen.

- Ervaart u kwaliteitszorg ook als 'duur'?
- Waaraan ligt dit volgens u?
- Kan de het verschil in de splitsing in aspecten voor interne kwaliteitszorg en accreditatie hier een rol in spelen?
- Hoe kijkt u tegen de tweede ronde van de accreditatie aan?

Afsluiting
- Bedankt voor uw medewerking
- Terugkoppelen uitkomsten?
- Inzage intern kwaliteitshandboek?

Appendix 5; Nederlandse samenvatting

Aanleiding en onderzoeksvraag
Globalisering en de kenniseconomie zijn de twee belangrijkste factoren die hebben geleid tot het internationaliseren van het hoger onderwijs (Goedegebuure, Jeliazkova e.a. 2002). Deze ontwikkeling heeft vervolgens geleid tot enkele (ingrijpende) hervormingen in het hoger onderwijs. Eén daarvan is invoering van de Bologna verklaring in Europa (Kwikkers, van Damme e.a. 2003). De Bologna verklaring en haar bijbehorende activiteiten (onder meer de invoering het bachelor-mastersysteem) hebben ervoor gezorgd dat externe kwaliteitszorg een impuls heeft gekregen. Externe kwaliteitszorg draagt bij aan het gelijktrekken van de Europese diploma's (NVAO 2007b). De invoering van kwaliteitszorg, volgens de eisen van de Bologna verklaring, wordt in Nederland 'accreditatie' genoemd.

In Nederland startte de invoering van het accreditatiesysteem in 2003. Elke opleiding die leidt tot een bachelor of master diploma is verplicht om zich elke zes jaar te laten accrediteren. De gestegen kosten, sinds de invoering van accreditatie, worden als een van de grootste problemen ervaren (NVAO 2007a; Min OCW 2005; Onderwijsinspectie 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2006a).

De gestegen kosten, vergeleken met het model voor 2003, worden veroorzaakt door 1) betalingen die de hogescholen aan de NVAO en de VBIs moeten voldoen (de directe kosten) en 2) andere activiteiten die hogescholen moeten doen om hun accreditatie te krijgen en houden (de indirecte kosten). De hoogte van de directe kosten zijn duidelijk. Het is lastiger om de exacte hoogte van de indirecte kosten te meten, omdat deze kosten bestaan uit activiteiten die toegewezen kunnen worden aan zowel de accreditatie als het interne kwaliteitszorgsysteem (Onderwijsinspectie 2005c). De manier waarop hogescholen hun interne kwaliteitszorgsysteem organiseren beïnvloedt de manier waarop deze toewijzing plaatsvindt. Kijkend vanuit dit perspectief is het interessant om te onderzoeken hoe hogescholen hun interne kwaliteitszorgsysteem organiseren en of die structuur de ervaring met de hoogte van de kosten voor accreditatie beïnvloedt. Dit maakt dat de onderzoeksvraag als volgt is;

Wat zijn de effecten van de structuur van interne kwaliteitszorg voor de ervaringen van kosten van het accreditatiesysteem van de Nederlandse hogescholen?

Om te komen tot een antwoord op de hoofdvraag zijn een vijftal deelvragen ontworpen. Door het beantwoorden van deze deelvragen kan een objectief antwoord op de hoofdvraag gevonden worden. De deelvragen zijn als volgt;

- *Uit welke organisatiestructuren bestaan hogescholen?*
- *Wat betekent interne kwaliteitszorg en hoe is het geïmplementeerd in Nederland?*
- *Hoe hebben hogescholen hun interne kwaliteitszorgsysteem georganiseerd?*
- *Hoe ervaren hogescholen de kosten voor het accreditatiesysteem?*
- *Wat is de relatie tussen de ervaringen van de kosten en de structuur van het interne kwaliteitszorgsysteem?*

Theorie
Om te komen tot een onderbouwd interview ontwerp en een heldere structuur van de analyse is een theoretisch raamwerk ontwikkeld. Dit raamwerk bestaat uit een aantal theorieën gerelateerd aan organisatiestructuren. Als eerste, Keuning and Eppink (2000) beschrijven organisatiestructuren als volgt;

- De indelingen van te verrichten werkzaamheden in functies en taken van functionarissen, werkgroepen en afdelingen.

- De vastgestelde bevoegdheden en de betrekkingen waarin functionarissen, werkgroepen en afdelingen tot elkaar staan bij de uitvoering van hun taken.
- De ingebouwde communicatiekanalen en mechanismen waardoor functionarissen, werkgroepen en afdelingen met elkaar in verbinding staan ten behoeve van de noodzakelijke wilsoverdracht en coördinatie.

De tweede benadering is Mintbergs configuratie van organisatiestructuren (1979). De 'professionele bureaucratie' van Mintzberg heeft de meeste overeenkomsten met de organisatiestructuren van hogescholen. Met 'professional' doelt Mintzberg op het feit dat de hogeschool afhankelijk is van de kennis en vaardigheden van de professional (de docent). 'Bureaucratie' wordt gebruikt, omdat de instellingen zijn geordend en gecoördineerd door standaardisering en formalisering. Het verschil tussen deze aspecten maakt hogescholen tot een complexe organisatie. De professionals werken autonoom, zij hebben specifieke kennis en ervaring die het de managers moeilijk maakt om 'grip' op ze te hebben (Dicks, Meesters e.a. 2005). Vanuit dit perspectief wordt binnen de hogeschool gebruikt gemaakt van kwaliteitsmodellen. Kwaliteitsmodellen maken zichtbaar hoe de professional werk en of ze aan de (verwachte) eisen van de manager en organisatie voldoen.

In het algemeen worden kwaliteitsmodellen gebruikt om een systeem te ontwikkelen dat de gehele organisatie binnen een bepaald tijdsbestek evalueert. Veel hogescholen gebruiken kwaliteitsmodellen als een basis om hun interne kwaliteitszorg systematisch, en in theorie, structureel te organiseren. Voor deze studie is gekozen om het INK-model, als kwaliteitsmodel, te gebruiken. Het INK-model is in Nederland een bekend en gewaardeerd model. Het INK-model leert organisaties hoe om te gaan met interne en externe dynamiek en de complexiteit van de organisatie zelf. Het model is opgebouwd uit verschillende op een systematische wijze gestructureerde criteria die staan voor de verschillende organisatiegebieden in een organisatie. Het INK-model is, in combinatie met de aspecten van het accreditatie model, gebruikt als leidraad om de interviewvragen op te stellen (INK 2009; Westerheijden 2008).

Methodologie
Het onderzoeksontwerp is ontworpen voor het doel van deze studie en bestaat uit een kwalitatief onderzoek met drie case-studies en een literatuur onderzoek (Babbie 2004; Verhoeven 2007). Dat de literatuur geen volledig overzicht van de organisatiestructuren van interne kwaliteitszorgsystemen binnen hogescholen weergeeft geeft aan dat dit onderzoek een belangrijk onderwerp betreft.

Case-studies en half-gestructureerde interviews worden gebruikt om inzicht te geven in de verschillen tussen de hogescholen. De cases bestaan uit drie hogescholen. De verschillen komen voort uit; organisatie (on)afhankelijkheid (kans dat de cases samenwerkingsverbanden zijn aangegaan) en locatie (in welk deel van Nederland zijn ze gevestigd). De cases zijn; 1) Saxion 2) Windesheim en 3) Hogeschool van Amsterdam. De cases verschillen op de onafhankelijke variabelen, die het waard maakt ze te vergelijken. Gelijkertijd, zijn ze gelijk op andere (controle) variabelen zoals grootte, waardoor het mogelijk is ze te vergelijken.

Om te zorgen dat alle aspecten van organisatiestructuur en kwaliteitszorg onderzocht worden is het model van Van Kemenade en Schaik (Van Kemenade, Vermeulen e.a. 2008) gebruikt als aanvulling op de theoretische benaderingen van Keuning en Eppink en Mintzberg van organisatiestructuren. Het model van Van Kemenade en Schaik bestaat uit de aspecten van het accreditatie systeem en het INK-model.

Analyse en conclusie
De interne kwaliteitszorg is binnen de drie hogescholen verschillend georganiseerd, maar ook hoe de hogescholen de hoogte van de kosten ervaren verschilt tussen de instellingen. Saxion is centraal

georganiseerd en heeft een structureel en transparant intern kwaliteitszorgsysteem. De afdeling kwaliteitszorg heeft een centrale plaats in de organisatie en heeft zowel een ondersteunende als controlerende functie in de richting van de opleidingen. Daarnaast is er regelmatig contact tussen de academies, het management en de afdeling kwaliteitszorg. De medewerkers in de academies voeren structureel en regelmatig hun taken voor de interne kwaliteitszorg uit. Hierdoor heeft Saxion weinig extra werk ter voorbereiding op het visitatiebezoek, wat bijdraagt dat Saxion de kosten voor accreditatie als laag ervaart. Volgens Saxion is al het werk voor accreditatie het geld en de moeite waard om een beeld te vormen van de organisatie en haar opleidingen.

Windesheim heeft een minder goed gestructureerd intern kwaliteitszorgsysteem, het systeem is nog niet ingebed in de dagelijkse werkzaamheden. De instituten gebruiken verschillende formats om de interne kwaliteitszorg te implementeren. Daarnaast vindt het overleg tussen de betrokkenen op onregelmatige basis plaats. De afdeling kwaliteitszorg kan alleen op aanvraag de instituten van advies voorzien. Door deze elementen is er geen helder overzicht van of en hoe de instituten hun interne kwaliteitszorg geïmplementeerd hebben. Het ontbreken van structuur en transparantie leiden ertoe dat medewerkers niet structureel hun taken voor de accreditatie vervullen, waardoor de voorbereiding voor het visitatiebezoek veel extra werk kost. Al deze aspecten leiden ertoe dat interne kwaliteitszorg nog niet volledig geaccepteerd is in de organisatie en dat Windesheim de kosten voor accreditatie als hoog ervaart.

De structuur van de HvA verschilt van de voorgaande twee. De HvA is meer decentraal georganiseerd. Dat houdt in dat de domeinen verantwoordelijk zijn voor hun eigen systeem, en dat er geen organisatie breed handboek is aangaande de structuur en implementatie van interne kwaliteitszorg. De controle vindt plaats tussen the directeur van het domein en de Raad van Bestuur. De afwezigheid van een lijnverantwoordelijkheid tussen de afdeling kwaliteitszorg en de domeinen en ontbreken van een communicatiemogelijkheid tussen de medewerkers van de betrokken partijen leiden tot een incompleet overzicht van hoe de verschillende domeinen de interne kwaliteitszorg hebben geïmplementeerd. Desondanks ervaart de HvA de kosten voor accreditatie als redelijk laag, vooral omdat zij kwaliteitszorg als onderdeel van een professionele organisatie zien. Toch is het frustrerend hoeveel tijd het interne kwaliteitszorgsysteem en de voorbereiding voor het visitatiebezoek vergen. Deze voorbereiding betekent namelijk dat een aantal medewerkers tijdelijk niet toekomen aan hun dagelijkse werkzaamheden. De uitkomsten van de analyse zijn terug te vinden in onderstaande tabel.

Tabel: organisatie interne kwaliteitszorg gecombineerd met de ervaringen van de kosten voor accreditatie

Case	**Organisatie interne kwaliteitszorg**	**Ervaring van de kosten**
Saxion	Centraal, gestructureerd en transparant	Laag
HvA	Decentraal, gestructureerd en gedeeltelijk transparant	Gedeeltelijk laag, gedeeltelijk hoog
Windesheim	Centraal, niet gestructureerd en gedeeltelijk transparant	Hoog

Concluderend, wanneer de interne kwaliteitszorg structureel georganiseerd is worden de kosten voor accreditatie in vergelijking met de andere cases als minder hoog ervaren. Wanneer het interne kwaliteitszorgsysteem minder goed gestructureerd is, worden de kosten voor accreditatie in vergelijking met de andere cases als hoog ervaren. Dit leidt ons naar het probleem van de interne motivatie van de hogescholen; een sterke interne motivatie om een intern kwaliteitszorgsysteem te ontwikkelen leidt tot een beter georganiseerd systeem, wat vervolgens leidt tot een positievere ervaring met het accreditatiesysteem. Een goed gestructureerd systeem bevat; transparantie van de structuur, regels en beleid, taakbeschrijving van de afdeling kwaliteitszorg, en regelmatig overleg tussen de betrokkenen.

Het veranderen van de interne motivatie en de 'kwaliteitscultuur' van de organisatie is moeilijk. Hiervoor zullen eerst een aantal beleidsveranderingen moeten plaatsvinden. De hoogte van de kosten voor accreditatie die wordt ervaren kan verlaagd worden door het interne kwaliteitszorgsysteem meer gestructureerd en transparant te organiseren. Om transparantie te bereiken zullen twee beleidsveranderingen doorgevoerd moeten worden; 1) de instituten moeten verplicht gebruik maken van hetzelfde format voor de implementatie van het interne kwaliteitszorgsysteem. Hierdoor zal de gelijkheid tussen de instituten verhoogd wordt. Deze handleiding, opgesteld door de hogeschool, zal niet de volledige structuur voor het systeem bevatten, maar kan gezien worden als een raamwerk waarin staat hoe de informatie aangeleverd moet worden, welke eisen moeten worden vervuld en welke processen gevolgd moeten worden voor de interne kwaliteitszorg en 2) vaker en regelmatiger contact tussen de afdeling kwaliteitszorg en de opleidingen. Dit zal leiden tot meer duidelijkheid voor de betrokken partijen over hoe de interne kwaliteitszorg is georganiseerd bij de verschillende opleidingen. Daarnaast zou dit de instituten kunnen stimuleren om een beter gestructureerd intern kwaliteitszorgsysteem te ontwikkelen. De individuele resultaten worden immers zichtbaar voor de rest van de organisatie. De combinatie van deze beleidsveranderingen zal de transparantie, en indirect de structuur, van het interne kwaliteitszorgsysteem verhogen.

Een aantal hogescholen ervaren dat zij hun kwaliteit moeten vastleggen voor anderen (NVAO en VBIs) in plaats van dat ze het voor zichzelf doen. Het implementeren van een intern kwaliteitszorgsysteem vanuit de interne motivatie zou het negatieve gevoel betreffende accreditatie kunnen veranderen; kwaliteitszorg zou moeten worden gezien als onderdeel van de reguliere kwaliteitsstructuur en 'organisatiecultuur'. In de 'organisatiecultuur' van deze educatieve instellingen is het van belang dat de medewerkers gemotiveerd zijn om de activiteiten voor een kwaliteitszorgsysteem in te bedden in hun dagelijkse werkzaamheden. Wanneer een gestructureerd en transparant intern kwaliteitszorgsysteem is geïmplementeerd en de medewerkers zijn gemotiveerd zullen meer activiteiten worden toegewezen aan het interne kwaliteitszorgsysteem en minder aan de accreditatie, waardoor accreditatie minder als een belasting wordt ervaren.

De invoering van de 'tweede ronde' van accreditatie zal de hoogte van de kosten die de hogescholen ervaren verlagen. Een van de veranderingen van de 'tweede ronde' is de opsplitsing van de huidige accreditatie in een algemene instellingsaudit en een (lichtere) opleidingsbeoordeling. Wanneer de uitkomst van de instellingsaudit positief is, zal de accreditatie voor de individuele opleiding minder werk kosten. De vermindering van de hoeveelheid werk zal resulteren in dat de kosten voor de accreditatie al minder hoog worden ervaren.

Zoals eerder genoemd, deze studie laat zien dat de hoge kosten niet alleen worden veroorzaakt door externe factoren, maar ook door interne factoren. Deze interne factoren worden gedeeltelijk veroorzaakt door de manier waarop hogescholen hun interne kwaliteitszorgsysteem organiseren. Met andere woorden, de hogescholen kunnen zelf iets doen om de hoogte van de interne kosten te verlagen, en daarmee ook de hoogte waarop deze kosten ervaren worden. Ik hoop dat door dit inzicht hogescholen het belang van een goed gestructureerd en ingebed intern kwaliteitszorgsysteem gaan inzien, wat resulteert in verbeteringen van hun interne kwaliteitszorgsysteem.