Pluralism in science and society - how can academic education or Bildung face these tasks?

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Contents:

- Background of my talk
- European academic education policy
- New demands for academic education
- Some educational options
Personal background

- Philosophy in Amsterdam, Heidelberg
- Psychology partly in Amsterdam
- Studium Generale: 14 yrs, 2 yrs. chair of Dutch SG association
- Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies since 2003
- Current research: philosophy of neuroscience
- Chair of interdisciplinary honours modules
- Member of National Collegiate Honours Council (U.S.)
- Member of Transdisciplinary-Net
- Member (& European liaison) of Association for Integrative Studies
Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies
(www.iis.uva.nl)

- Bachelor degree Natural and Social Sciences (± 400)
- Bachelor degree Future Planet Studies (± 200)
- Research Master in Brain and Cognitive Sciences (±100)
- Interdisciplinary electives (± 1000)
- Interdisciplinary Honours classes (± 150)
- Interdisciplinary minors (100)
200 years after Humboldt: tension between utilitarianism and Bildung?

Humboldt’s University/vision:
- Knowledge as a unified indivisible entity
- *Einheit von Forschung und Lehre*.
- Primacy of *Wissenschaft* and research
- The individual and common pursuit of ‘truth’ in ‘Einsamkeit und Freiheit’
- *Lehr- und Lernfreiheit*
- The creation of a unified national culture with *Wissenschaft* and University as the centre-piece: ‘Bildung’
- *Wissenschaft* and (higher) education as the second categorical imperative of the central state
  (Nybom 2007)
European context and goals of education

- Eur. Comm. Bergen communique, 2005:
  - Goals of education are ‘preparing the student for the labour market, for further competence building and for active citizenship.’

- European Commission, 2006, ‘Modernisation Agenda’:
  - ‘Modernising Universities for Europe's competitiveness in a global knowledge economy’
  - ‘Enhance interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity.’

- Follow-up report from the Commission, 2008:
  - Mobility
  - New Skills for New Jobs
  - University-Business cooperation
  - Transparency in higher education performance
New Curricula - Aiming for ‘Relevance’, but what relevance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Curricula</th>
<th>Emerging Curricula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowing that</td>
<td>Knowing how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communication</td>
<td>Oral communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary skills</td>
<td>Transferable skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual orientation</td>
<td>Action orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-making</td>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge as process</td>
<td>Knowledge as product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept-based</td>
<td>Issue-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge-based</td>
<td>Talk-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure</td>
<td>Applied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposition-based learning</td>
<td>Experiential learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Source: Barnett et al. (2001, p. 437).*
Did American education take over our interest in Bildung?

- Global Context: education for ‘inclusive global citizenship’ (Nussbaum 1997):
  - Socratic ability
  - Global citizenship
  - Narrative imagination

- ‘American universities aim to prepare students for both successful careers and satisfying lives, Bologna concentrates almost exclusively on the economic advantages enjoyed by competent individuals and the societies in which they live’ (Gaston 2008)
Pluralism in science, society, morals, etc.

- Theoretical pluralism within science
- Pluralist ideas on science and society interaction
- Pluralism in societal realms
- Pluralism in (academic) life plans
- Moral pluralism
Interdisciplinarity & Transdisciplinarity: porous borders of sciences

- The problem of sustainability, including ‘sustainable knowledge’
- Necessity of the education of self-reflective academics
- Creativity is necessary in science, too
Interdisciplinarity: integrating insights

Forms of interdisciplinarity:
1. Borrowing of concepts and methods
2. Problem orientated cooperation
3. Increased consistency of subjects or methods
4. Emergence of an interdiscipline

Why inter- or even transdisciplinarity?
Non-scientific reasons for interdisciplinary academic education

1. Cooperation with non-academics
2. Public accountability
3. Development of applications
4. Compliance and use of science
5. Civic and ethical role of scientist
Transdisciplinarity: inclusive science

- Including various actors in scientific endeavours
- Making use of non-scientific forms of knowledge
- Explicit attention to implementation and moral issues
Requirements for *scientifically* and *societally* robust academic education.

‘Capabilities approach’ to education - but not to the exclusion of disciplinary knowledge!

- Scientific, cognitive skills
- Meta-cognitive skills
- Reflexive skills
- Communicative skills
- Adamant is: how to **integrate** these with each others.

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Op een schaal van 1 tot 4 is voor een aantal domeinen aangegeven wat het belang van een aantal competenties is, afgezet tegen de mate waarop de scholing (in het universitair onderwijs) daaraan tegemoetkomt. Hoewel er duidelijke verschillen zijn tussen de verschillende domeinen – waarbij natuurrechters de minste last hebben van een kloof tussen scholing en arbeidspraktijk – valt op dat over het algemeen de afgestudeerden een behoorlijk manco ervaren. Dat manco wordt door deze monitor in twee
Studium Generale: avoiding being mere decoration

- General education but separate from curriculum
- Free experimentation in programming
- Reaching out to society
- Focus on contents, or competencies?
- Credited, or not?
Honours program: focus on excellence

- Different from ‘cum laude’ study
- Additional to or substituting normal courses
- Requiring both depth and width
- Honours-community as an extra asset
- Honours as a realm for educational experimentation
‘Service learning’ - students as commuters

- Experience in the workplace
- Learning to apply academic knowledge
- Citizens experience the value of academic approach
- University & students give returns to society
Challenge: similar counterforces & goals, but site-specific solutions

Observe differences in
- University curricula
- Student body
- Societal environment

Similar in aiming for
- Coping with pluralism
- Building a community
- Robust and ‘sustainable’ education: integration

Chances for
- Exchange of best practices
- Sharing of goals and criteria, evaluations
- Joining forces for external lobbying
Vielen Dank!

- www.units.muohio.edu/aisorg/index.shtml (Association for Integrative Studies)
- www.transdisciplinarity.ch (Transdisciplinarity_Net)
- www.nchchonors.org (Nat. Collegiate of Honors Colleges)
- www.iis.uva.nl
- http://home.medewerker.uva.nl/m.keestra