Research in higher professional education: A staff perspective
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Chapter 3

Academic Drift in Dutch Higher Professional Education Evaluated: A Staff Perspective
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3.1 Introduction

Academic drift is a concept used to describe academisation processes of institutions for higher professional education (HPE, in Dutch: ‘hogescholen’). Although it has a longer and wider tradition (Neave, 1978, 1979), the concept of academic drift was used to analyse the tendency of the Polytechnics in the United Kingdom to develop activities comparable to traditional universities at the end of the 20th century, followed by various comparable developments in other European countries (Kyvik, 2009; Teichler, 2008). With the Bologna Declaration in 1999, new policy lines were formulated in light of the global economy, which resulted in changed demands on the professionals of the 21st century and a more uniform system of qualifications between university and higher professional education (Teichler, 2008). The new demands also suggested that professionals should be trained more in research activities, enabling them to apply and update innovative knowledge in their work context (Brew, 2010b).

As a result, in several European countries, institutions of HPE were expected to become hybrid institutions of research and teaching; prior to this, they were teaching institutions only. Formally, the new research activities introduced the institutions of HPE into the domain of the traditional universities (Kyvik, 2004; Kyvik & Skodvin, 2003; Mudde, 2005; Teichler, 2008; Witte, et al., 2008). In this process, the Dutch traditional universities showed a territorial attitude, thinking these new activities could result in the end of the binary system of higher education as well as the end of their monopoly of the research grants of the government (Griffioen & De Jong, 2007; Huisman & Kaiser, 2001; Lepori & Kyvik, 2010). The institutions for HPE, on the other hand, acted from a strategy of accentuating their differences from the traditional universities, while striving for equal status (Lepori & Kyvik, 2010; Teichler, 2008).

This chapter empirically investigates the potential for academic drift at the staff level in the Dutch institutions of higher professional education by studying the preferences of lecturers as well as managers regarding the aims for research at their institutions. And even though individual research preferences and organizational or teaching actions are only loosely related (Visser-Wijnveen, 2009), the preferences of lecturers and managers may indicate the orientation for institutions of HPE. Further, this chapter will look at the perceived effects of
research activities to indicate actual academic drift in the institutions. This study therefore adds an empirical base to the more emotional debate on academic drift.

3.2 Academic Drift in Dutch Institutions of Higher Professional Education

The Dutch system of higher education, the context of this study, has a binary structure that consists of 14 traditional and technical universities (here collectively called ‘traditional universities’) and just over 40 institutions of higher professional education (De Boer, et al., 2007; De Weert & Leijnse, 2010; Huisman, 2008). The latter type of institutions, which are somewhat comparable to the former British Polytechnics and the German Fachhochschulen, call themselves ‘Universities of Applied Sciences’ (UAS) (De Weert & Leijnse, 2010; Teichler, 2008; Vogel, 2009).

The concept of academic drift is mostly described as the attempt of institutions of HPE to strive for an academic status, recognition, and rights associated with university institutions in an upward movement to resemble the university (Christensen & Erno-Kjolhede, 2011; Kyvik, 2007; Teichler, 2008). Neave (1979) describes academic drift as a departure from a series of publicly stated and accepted objectives in which academic and theoretical work are opposed to the development of the vocational side. Harwood (2010) defines these objectives as universities being more ‘science-oriented’ and non-universities being more ‘practice-oriented’, by which the drift of HPE institutions can be considered a shift of educational institutions to become more science-oriented and less practice-oriented. Based on a division by Neave (1979) into three analytic levels of academic drift, Kyvik (2007) describes six different, though related, academic processes: student drift, staff drift, programme drift, institutional drift, sector drift, and policy drift. The remainder of this section describes the Dutch situation and its debate on academic drift in HPE through the six processes of academic drift defined by Kyvik (2007).

Policy Drift

Institutions of higher professional education were defined as a separate level of secondary education from the 1960s onward. The Dutch institutions for higher vocational education have been primarily teaching institutions (Huisman, 2008). Conducting research to improve the individual professions has been allowed by law since 1986 (WHBO) when the institutes of higher professional education were placed outside the system of secondary education. But aside from a few contract-research activities, these activities occurred only in the final years of the curricula, and as an activity of lecturers separate of the educational programs. With the introduction of the Higher Education Act (WHW) in 1992, the higher vocational educational programs became formally part of the higher education system (De Weert & Leijnse, 2010; Huisman, 2008). Therefore, state authorities have slowly but surely adjusted
their expectations for the institutions of HPE: from being part of secondary education towards being part of the higher educational system, including research-related tasks, which can be considered policy drift (Kyvik, 2007). These research-related tasks were supposed to help educate a new kind of professionals who would be able to apply and update innovative knowledge in their work context (Brew, 2010b). The Dutch government considered the institutes of higher professional education essential to fulfil this task (Dutch Ministry of Education Culture and Science & Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, 2001).

Figure 3.1 Number of students in Dutch HPE and universities (based on CBS, 2011b).

**Student Drift as a Necessity**
An increase in the number of students has influenced the presence of policy drift in the higher educational system from the 1960s onward (see Figure 3.1), partly due to the government’s open-door policy for higher education. Traditional universities were not able to cope with the influx because of the tradition of research-intensive education, which was a costly, small-scale type of education (Baggen, 2005; Rupp, 1997; Teichler, 2008). In addition to several diversifying adjustments to the traditional university system (Baggen, 2005), the Dutch institutes of higher professional education became a new, less expensive part of the higher educational system. In other words, they were made more equal to the traditional universities than before (Huisman, 2008; Teichler, 2008). Nowadays, the Dutch institutes of higher professional education account for more than 60% of all Dutch students in higher education.

The general increase of students in the total system of higher education during the 20th century can be considered as student drift (Kyvik, 2007). Still, when looking at the
relative numbers of students between HPE and university education in Figure 3.1, both slopes seem parallel. Thus on the aggregate level there is no indication of student drift from higher professional education to university higher education.

Implementing Research Tasks: Sector, Institutional, and Programme Drift
The European policy drift around the Bologna Declaration in 1999 resulted in a treaty between the Dutch Minister of Education and the institutes of higher professional education (2001), by which new research-related tasks were defined for all HPE on top of their teaching tasks:

1. To raise the quality of the educational programs and the quality of the teaching staff.
2. To add to the theoretical body of knowledge of the different professions.
3. To help the professional field to innovate.

The legal status of research activities in the institutes of higher professional education remained based on the law of 1992 (WHW): ‘Hogescholen (HPE) [...] can carry out design and development activities or research directed to the professional field [...]’. The possibility of public funding was added to initiate research-related activities. Previously, formal entry into the system of higher education research was almost nonexistent in the HPE institutions and no structural means for it were present, whereas research activities are central to the identity of the traditional universities (Witte, et al., 2008). Also, in the HPE institutions, research skills or experience usually constitute no ground for selection in the application procedures for lecturers (De Jong & De Jager, 2007; Kyvik & Skodvin, 2003), since professional and didactic skills were seen as most necessary for educating professionals. Large groups of lecturers had professional bachelor’s degrees as their highest formal qualification (Dutch Ministry of Education Culture and Science, 2011). Even recent estimates imply that, on average, academic staff in institutes of higher professional education spend only about 8% of their time on research activities (Huisman, 2008). All this has led to a situation today in which most of these institutions lack a research culture (Huisman, 2008; Van der Linden, et al., 2012).

The character of the new research activities was supposed to be practical rather than science-oriented, with research questions directed towards solving problems derived from the practical domain and adding to the educational programs (Advisory Council for Science and Technology Policy, 2005; Harwood, 2010). Sector-wide, professional researchers (lectoren) were introduced as carriers of the new research-related tasks to develop and circulate (new) knowledge (Lepori & Kyvik, 2010). Having a master’s or PhD became a criterion in selection procedures for lecturers (in addition to professional experience). A sector-wide system for evaluating research quality was developed (VKO, 2010).
On the institutional level, most institutions created research and development groups (*kenniskringen*) consisting of one or more professional researchers combined with several lecturers. Programmes to allow lecturers study for a master’s degree or a PhD were also introduced (further indicating staff drift), and many networks, mostly regional, were established between professors and external companies with evidence-based innovation as the main objective (Huisman, 2008).

At the program level, research skills were implemented as part of the final qualifications. Some of these qualifications were based on the Dublin Descriptors (Nuffic, 2010), but often the more advanced goal of qualifying the students to conduct (practical) research was added.

*Fear of Academic Drift*

Indication of changes can be found on all levels, but the expressed fear of academic drift in the public debate after the Treaty of 2001 is mainly directed to the sector level (see also Griffioen & De Jong, 2007). In public debates, the institutes of higher professional education are accused of wanting to conduct research similar to the research activities of the traditional universities, by (a) choosing similar aims for research, such as improving the practical field by research results; and (b) practising similar methods of research, such as practice-based types of research (Advisory Council for Science and Technology Policy, 2005; Dijstelbloem & Schuyl, 2003; Duursma, 2005; Leijnse, 2005b; Mudde, 2005).

Improving the quality of their own educational programmes and teaching staff through research is not an aim of the traditional universities (who usually direct research toward adding to the general body of knowledge) (Leijnse, 2005b; Van Lieshout & Borgdorff, 2005). Hence, if research at the institutes of higher professional education were to be directed towards improving their own educational programs, the fear of academic drift would be unnecessary. At the same time this fear could decrease possibilities to collaborate in research or education. The question is whether or not institutes of HPE, within the direction of research as agreed on in the Treaty of 2001, choose a more ‘scientific’ or a more ‘practical’ approach. The traditional universities state that the aim of the (indirect) improvement (of theory and education) in the professional field cannot be reached, since research in the institutes of HPE is structured as a stand-alone activity and not connected to educational tasks (Mudde, 2005).

Another way of evaluating the direction of research towards educational and professional improvement aims is by looking at the perceptions of the employees. Research activities at the institutes of HPE are of a recent date, so organisational structures are being built. The question is: In which direction do the lecturers and managers of the institutes of HPE want to develop their research activities and organisations? Do these developments
lead to academic drift in the institutes of higher professional education? These preferences of lecturers and managers on research-related aims, therefore, are central in this study.

3.3 Academic Drift in This Study

This study evaluates academic drift of Dutch institutes of higher professional education by looking at the preferences of lecturers and managers for the direction of research by their institutions. As previously explained, the Dutch institutions of HPE received a three-goal task with the legal space in which to conduct research: (a) an educational goal; (b) a theoretical goal; and (c) an external goal. Following Harwood (2010), the more ‘science-oriented’ aims are considered to imply a higher potential of academic drift on the staff level, while being more ‘practice-oriented’ implies a lower potential of academic drift.

The aim to improve the quality of education implies a low indication of academic drift, since it considers research activities that are directed towards improving the traditional teaching task of HPE institutions. On the other end of the range, adding to a theoretical body of knowledge by conducting research is seen as a goal that implies a larger potential for academic drift since this goal is the most science-oriented. Thirdly, innovation in the professional field is considered a new task that does not necessarily imply a potential for academic drift because it is not initially scientific. Therefore, a higher preference towards innovating the professional field is not seen as an indication of academic drift but rather as an extension of the professional teaching task of institutions of HPE.

The same order will be used to study how lecturers and managers perceive the effects of research at their institutions. Are the effects of research activities, as perceived by the lecturers and managers, directed towards theoretical aims (indicating academic drift), towards improvement of educational quality (lacking academic drift), or towards innovation in the professional field (indicating an extension of the traditional teaching task, but not indicating academic drift)?

3.4 Managers, Lecturers, and Educational Changes

The staff of institutions of higher professional education in this study is divided into two groups: lecturers (teaching staff) and managers (non-teaching staff related to the primary process). Preferences concerning research aims are studied in both groups. In the Dutch HPE, lecturers are at the root of changing HPE into more research-based organisations, since lecturers are the primary connection between the institution and the students (and often the main connection with the professional field) (Griffioen, et al., 2012; Runhaar, 2008; Van den Berg, Sleeegers, Geijssel, & Vandenberghe, 2000). Hence, their perceptions and activities will influence the direction and speed with which the proposed goals are reached or resisted (McRoy & Gibbs, 2009). Choices that educational managers make have a larger impact on
the organisational conditions in which education takes place (Boerma, Griffioen, & De Jong, 2011). Therefore, both managers and lecturers are essential for all educational innovations and for implementing a new primary process. Both being important actors, lecturers and managers also often have different perceptions on many organizational aspects, with organizational aims being one of them (Peterson & White, 1992).

*Perceptions of Lecturers*

When defining expectations for lecturers’ perceptions concerning the aims of research, the first issue to consider is that the primary loyalty of lecturers is to their profession. In the case of Dutch higher professional education, this means their first loyalty is their students. Research shows that the loyalty of lecturers is usually less to their school or department, and the loyalty towards the institution takes an even lower place (McRoy & Gibbs, 2009; Seyd, 2000). Secondly, the implementation of research activities directed towards raising the quality of educational programs and teaching staff is increasingly affecting the daily routine of lecturers (Van den Berg, et al., 2000). An important issue is whether lecturers feel their professional identity or role is being threatened by new research activities or whether these activities conflict with what teachers think is right (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Geijsel, Sleegers, Van den Berg, & Kelchtermans, 2001; Hill & Haigh, 2012). The expectation for this study is that the lecturers’ preferences in research aims will be directed towards education, since this is closer to their traditional loyalties and identities, rather than showing indications of academic drift.

*Employees with Management Tasks*

While lecturers mostly have knowledge of one educational program or one department, managers more often consider the national and European trends and policies and usually see more possibilities for and fewer obstacles to change. Managers are also mostly the ones initiating large-scale changes or laying out the (sub)institutional maps for implementing national policy changes. Further, managers are usually able to see changes as a possible better future, while lecturers undergo policy innovations and often distrust yet another change process (McRoy & Gibbs, 2009; Van den Berg & Sleegers, 1996). Therefore, for this study, it is expected that managers will have a more positive view of the non-educational research aims than lecturers while also showing a similar positive view of the educational aims.

3.5 Method

*Research Questions*

The current study investigates the potential for academic drift and is limited to the process
of staff drift. What are the preferences of lecturers and managers concerning the three aims for research of higher professional education (indicating degree of potential academic drift on the staff level)? What effects do they perceive of research activities (indicating actual academic drift)? What are the differences between lecturers and managers in this respect?

Sample
All employees of six regionally distributed higher professional education institutions were asked to complete an extensive questionnaire on research-related topics, designed by the authors. This research includes only the responses of those who have at least two scores in each scale used and scores on ‘gender’, ‘being a teacher or not’, and ‘educational level’ (N=1,826, lecturers’ N=1,435). The respondents who do not have teaching tasks are included only if they engage in management or staff tasks directly related to the management of education (for example, not related to information technology services). Due to privacy issues, the response ratio remains somewhat unclear (most conservative estimate: 21%). We expect the response differences between the institutions mostly to be due to differences in reminder frequencies.

Of the respondents, most are lecturers (79%), most are men (54%), and most have a university degree (69%), of whom 6% have completed a PhD. The range of respondents from each institution is from 8% to 28% of the total sample. The mean age is 47 years (range 21-68). A comparison with the national population shows the range of age and gender to be on average (Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, 2010a), while the educational level shows a little higher percentage of university degrees and somewhat fewer PhDs than on average in the Dutch educational staff of HPE (Dutch Ministry of Education Culture and Science, 2011).

Measures
All the respondents were asked to react to 10 statements regarding the aims of research at the institutes of higher professional education, scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from ‘very important’ (=4) to ‘not important’ (=1) (for all items, see Table 3.1). Based on these 10 items, three scales have been constructed in accordance with the means of the separate items. These three scales are in line with the three aforementioned tasks given to the new professors: (a) educational task (2 items, Cronbach’s alpha=.72); (b) theoretical task (4 items, Cronbach’s alpha=.75); and (c) external task (4 items, Cronbach’s alpha=.73).

Based on another set of 10 statements, data on the effects of research that the respondents perceive in their own institutions were gathered, out of which three scales have been constructed: (a) educational effects (2 items, Cronbach’s alpha=.85); (b) theoretical effects (4 items, Cronbach’s alpha=.86); and (c) external effects (4 items, Cronbach’s alpha=.87).
alpha=.86). For tasks and effects the item ‘bring new knowledge to education’ statistically shared more variance with the theoretical scales (‘knowledge’ part of the item) than with the ‘education’ scales. Therefore this item was added to the scale of theoretical tasks and to the scale of theoretical effects. A single item indicates whether the respondents feel research activities in general belong at the HPE (Likert-4).

Further, the researchers requested personal variables such as gender, the name of the institution, the highest educational degree (PhD, university level, higher professional education, middle-level professional education), and the main task of the respondent (teaching, staff, management, lecturer, or other).

Analysis

First, the results for each of the separate items and for the scales are described (means, standard deviations) for lecturers and managers. The order of importance between the scales on tasks and the scales on effects will be tested by Student’s t-test for teachers and managers separately. The preferences of teachers and managers will be compared in several ANCOVAs, in which the scales are separately used as dependent variables and ‘being a teacher or not’ is used as an independent variable. Gender, the institution of employment, and educational level are used as covariates. All analyses were conducted using SPSS18. Due to the unbalanced design with different n for lecturers and managers, SSTYPE1 is used. A more conservative probability level of α=.01 will be used to avoid the risk of the Family Wise Error Rate (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

### Table 3.1: Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) of Observed Variables and Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks: My institution should direct research to...</th>
<th>Percep. Total</th>
<th>Percep. of Lecturers</th>
<th>Percep. of Managers</th>
<th>Effects: I see research in my institution having an effect on...</th>
<th>Percep. of Lecturers</th>
<th>Percep. of Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enlarge external orientation of the institution</td>
<td>3.2 (.58)</td>
<td>3.2 (.59)</td>
<td>3.4 (.49)</td>
<td>2.7 (.70)</td>
<td>2.6 (.71)</td>
<td>2.9 (.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help companies and public organizations innovate</td>
<td>3.3 (.76)</td>
<td>3.2 (.78)</td>
<td>3.5 (.64)</td>
<td>2.8 (.82)</td>
<td>2.7 (.84)</td>
<td>3.0 (.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve position of institution in society</td>
<td>3.1 (.85)</td>
<td>3.0 (.87)</td>
<td>3.3 (.69)</td>
<td>2.6 (.81)</td>
<td>2.5 (.83)</td>
<td>2.8 (.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solve practical issues of professional practice</td>
<td>3.5 (.69)</td>
<td>3.5 (.71)</td>
<td>3.6 (.61)</td>
<td>2.7 (.85)</td>
<td>2.7 (.87)</td>
<td>3.0 (.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Scale</td>
<td>3.2 (.62)</td>
<td>3.1 (.63)</td>
<td>3.3 (.55)</td>
<td>2.4 (.71)</td>
<td>2.4 (.72)</td>
<td>2.5 (.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create new knowledge</td>
<td>3.4 (.75)</td>
<td>3.3 (.76)</td>
<td>3.5 (.66)</td>
<td>2.6 (.84)</td>
<td>2.5 (.85)</td>
<td>2.8 (.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop new theories</td>
<td>2.9 (.92)</td>
<td>2.9 (.94)</td>
<td>3.0 (.84)</td>
<td>2.2 (.86)</td>
<td>2.2 (.88)</td>
<td>2.2 (.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver good researchers from UAS</td>
<td>3.0 (.89)</td>
<td>2.9 (.90)</td>
<td>3.1 (.83)</td>
<td>2.4 (.84)</td>
<td>2.3 (.85)</td>
<td>2.4 (.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring new knowledge to education</td>
<td>3.4 (.68)</td>
<td>3.4 (.70)</td>
<td>3.6 (.60)</td>
<td>2.6 (.85)</td>
<td>2.5 (.87)</td>
<td>2.7 (.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Scale</td>
<td>3.5 (.58)</td>
<td>3.5 (.59)</td>
<td>3.6 (.52)</td>
<td>2.6 (.80)</td>
<td>2.6 (.82)</td>
<td>2.8 (.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the quality of education</td>
<td>3.6 (.61)</td>
<td>3.6 (.62)</td>
<td>3.7 (.56)</td>
<td>2.6 (.85)</td>
<td>2.5 (.87)</td>
<td>2.7 (.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the level of the teaching staff</td>
<td>3.4 (.70)</td>
<td>3.4 (.72)</td>
<td>3.5 (.60)</td>
<td>2.7 (.88)</td>
<td>2.6 (.88)</td>
<td>2.8 (.76)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=1826, lecturers’ n=1435
3.6 Findings

Research-Related Aims

Most of the managers (79%) and more than half of the lecturers state (63%) that research, in their perception, indeed belongs at the HPE (scoring 3 or 4). An ANCOVA procedure shows that managers (3.1) have a more positive perception of the presence of research at the HPE than lecturers (2.8), [F(1)=33.66 and p<.000].

On average, lecturers’ mean scores for the different items on aims range from 2.9 to 3.6 (4-point Likert scale). Lecturers score highest on ‘to improve the level of education’, while ‘to develop new theories’ and ‘to deliver good researchers from UAS’ scored lowest (for descriptives, see Table 3.1). For managers, the task ‘to develop new theories’ on average scores the lowest (2.9) and ‘improve the level of education’ scores the highest (3.7). On all items, the managers score higher than lecturers, except for the item ‘to develop new theories’.

Effects of Research Activities

When looking at the effects perceived for each of these tasks, all scores are lower than the related scores for the importance of aims. The effect of research activities on the ‘development of new theories’ scores the lowest among lecturers as well as managers (both 2.2). Lecturers score the effects of research activities ‘to enlarge external orientation of the institution’ and ‘solving practical issues of professional practice’ highest (both 2.7). Managers perceive the effects on the same aspects as the highest (both scoring 3.0).

Again, the scores of the managers are higher for all aspects than those of the lecturers, except for the mutual lowest score. Further, for both aims and effects, the standard deviation among the managers is smaller for all items than the standard deviation among the lecturers, which shows the managers score more equally among themselves.

Ordering in the Perception of Tasks

When the aims are grouped in scales, a paired Student’s t-test shows that the lecturers score the educational aims higher than external tasks [t(1432)=16.61; p<.000], and external tasks higher than theoretical tasks [t(1432)=3.89; p<.000]. The managers score the aims in the same order, with educational tasks scoring higher than external aims [t(390)=5.72; p<.000], and external aims scoring higher than theoretical aims [t(390)=7.14; p<.000]. Although the ordering of both lecturers and managers is similar, the scores of the managers are higher on all three scales, ranging from 3.3 to 3.6, while the lecturers have a mean score ranging from 3.1 to 3.5.
Ordering in Perception of Effects

The lecturers (range 2.4-2.6) score on average somewhat lower on each scale than the managers (range 2.5-2.8). The perceived effects of research activities show that the lecturers see no difference between educational effects and external effects \([t(1432)=2.22; p=.027(ns)]\). Both the educational effects \([t(390)=9.17; p<.000]\) and external effects \([t(390)=14.04; p<.000]\) score higher than the theoretical effects. The managers score the external effects of research activities higher than the educational effects \([t(390)=3.99; p<.000]\). The theoretical effects also receive lower scores than the educational effects \([t(390)=9.17; p<.000]\).

Perception of Lecturers versus Perception of Managers on Aims

The perceptions of the lecturers and managers regarding different aims and effects are tested in an ANCOVA procedure and controlled for gender, educational level, and institution (for the full model and results on all modelled variables, see Table 3.2). The managers score each type of aim for research higher than the lecturers do, with \(F(1)=37.67\) and \(p<.000\) for external tasks, \(F(1)=10.85\) and \(p=.001\) for knowledge tasks, and \(F(1)=10.41\) and \(p=.001\) for educational tasks.

Differences in Perceived Effects

The managers perceive larger effects on all types of aims for research than do the lecturers, with \(F(1)=49.03\) and \(p<.000\) for external effects, \(F(1)=13.89\) and \(p<.000\) for knowledge effects, and \(F(1)=23.39\) and \(p<.000\) for educational effects (for all results, see Table 3.2).

Differences in Extreme Scores

After finding the differences between the managers and lecturers, as described previously, it became interesting to test additionally (post hoc) whether the lecturers and managers score differently on the extremes, particularly how often respondents score high (4) on the items of the different scales. This frequency indicates a higher or lower aspiration towards each of the aims, depending on the scale. A Pearson’s chi-square analysis shows that the managers more often have high aspiration with respect to external tasks \(\chi^2(4)=43.96; p<.000\), and to theoretical tasks \(\chi^2(4)=18.82; p=.001\). There is no difference between lecturers and managers in scoring highly on educational tasks \(\chi^2(2)=8.60; p=.014(ns)\).

3.7 Conclusion and Discussion

Traditional universities in The Netherlands show a territorial attitude towards the research activities at the Dutch institutes of higher professional education (Griffioen & De Jong, 2007). This study investigates the perceptions of lecturers and managers to empirically evaluate
indications of the intention for academic drift and actual academic drift at the staff level. The combined results show there is a moderate indication of potential for academic drift (aims) and of actual academic drift (effects).

In general, both lecturers and managers are positive about research belonging at the HPE, although managers are significantly more positive. Nevertheless, thinking that research activities belong at the HPE, as such, does not necessarily indicate academic drift since the direction of research activities (being ‘more practical’ or ‘more scientific’) is not yet specified.

When the aims of research activities are considered, both lecturers and managers consider all three organizational aims for research (increasing quality of education, adding to the theoretical body of knowledge, and innovating in the professional field) important. In the ranking of the scale averages, the educational aims receive the highest place, followed by the aim of innovating in the professional field; the theoretical aim scores lowest. Thus a moderate indication of potential for academic drift can be seen, since all aims received positive scores, including the more ‘scientific’ theoretical aim. However, education was and is still the main aim of the institutes of higher professional education in the eyes of both lecturers and managers.

Lecturers and managers have less uniform perceptions of effects of research activities. The managers perceive a larger extension than do lecturers of the traditional teaching aims.
towards innovating in the professional field through research.

Since there is no difference in how the lecturers perceive the research effects on educational quality or external innovation, one can say that this equality also indicates an extension of the teaching aim. Previously, HPE institutions acted mostly as teaching institutions only. Innovating the professional field was only done by educating new professionals, and the institutions previously did not aim for innovation by research, since research activities as such were first introduced to get the educational programs at least up-to-date (Advisory Council for Science and Technology Policy, 2005). So, the positive score of lecturers on the perceived effects of this aim can therefore be seen as an indication of change. Furthermore, at best a small indication of actual academic drift in the perceived effects of research activities can be seen with all theoretical aspects scoring around the midpoint of the scale (2.4-2.9).

When the number of high scores is considered, managers tend to score more positively on items concerning external aims as well as on items concerning theoretical aims, hence managers more often show potential of academic drift. Also, a larger group of managers than lecturers find it important to strive for a role in helping to innovate in the professional field by research activities. These results are in line with previous research in which managers were more optimistic than lecturers regarding goals for innovation in education (McRoy & Gibbs, 2009; Peterson & White, 1992; Van den Berg & Sleegers, 1996).

Finally, striving to achieve the activities and status of traditional universities is considered central in academic drift (Christensen & Erno-Kjolhede, 2011; Edwards & Miller, 2008; Harwood, 2010; Neave, 1979). When the results of this study are considered, a moderate indication of potential for staff drift has been found for both lecturers and managers of Dutch HPE. Managers are more positive on all aspects and show more potential for academic drift than do lecturers, but both groups consider education to be their main activity when aims for research are considered.

Limitations and Implications for Practice

In this study, academic drift is reduced to staff drift, one of the six academic processes in which academic drift can take place, as defined by Kyvik (2007). With respect to staff drift, this study is particularly interested in the perceptions of lecturers and managers, which has limitations when compared to actual activities being measured. Therefore, further research should include the measurement of actual research activities, as well as the individual preferences of lectureres for research and/or teaching as part of the construct of staff drift. Aspects of the other five processes of drift should also be studied. The limitation of the current study to processes of staff drift asks for further research in The Netherlands and other parts of Europe on the other five processes of academic drift to fully describe and
understand the process of academic drift in HPE institutions.

The implications for practice are twofold: First, when further implementation of research activities is considered, it would be wise to connect research activities explicitly to the improvement of educational activities, because education is perceived to be the most important activity of higher professional education and also as the most important outcome of their research activities. Even though these institutions are increasingly striving for the explicit connection between research and teaching, it is no easy task. Organizational structures have mostly started out with separate structures for research and teaching, and only small groups of lecturers are nowadays actually involved in research activities (Dutch Ministry of Education Culture and Science, 2011). Connective experiences as well as organizational structures have yet to be built. The HPE institutions should learn from the body of knowledge on the connection between research and teaching (and its limitations) in the traditional universities (Barnett, 2006; Brew, 2010a; Elsen, Visser-Wijnveen, Van der Rijst, & Van Driel, 2008; Healey, 2005; Verburgh, Schouteden, & Elen, 2012).

Secondly, when the HPE institutions are actually directing their research aims towards improving educational practices, this can also be of interest for the traditional universities, who have a long research tradition but sometimes a less explicit developed tradition in teaching and didactics than the institutes of higher professional education do. By exchanging these kinds of research and teaching experiences, both types of institutions could improve their practices. For the HPE institutions, a possible additional result can be to develop their own research culture (Griffioen & Boei, 2010).