Management skills from different educational settings

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Introduction

In The Netherlands we frequently hear students saying that leaving home, moving into a room or student housing, being independent and taking care of yourself are conducive to one's overall development. Although leaving home undoubtedly has its merits, we set out to research what it is exactly that constitutes these advantages. More specifically, would living in a room, student house or residential hall on a campus contribute to the development of certain skills – in particular, management skills?

In the spring of 1992 a number of higher education and academic institutions in The Netherlands were approached – schools which educate students towards managerial functions. Seven programmes (three of which are campus programmes with halls of residence: Technical University Twente, Higher Hotelschool Maastricht and Nijenrode University – The Netherlands Business School) agreed to co-operate in the research project. The last two programmes were based originally on the ideology of the traditional boarding school model. During the 1950s these schools were training institutions with a strong link to the required skills of the professional practice.

A social hybrid

As regards the residence and education form of campus, Dutch academic and higher education has no campus tradition, contrary to the USA and England. What we do have is the phenomenon of residential training institutions with halls of residence.

However, during the 1960s, the three higher education institutions mentioned in the introduction (Twente University, Maastricht College and Nijenrode University – The Netherlands Business School) agreed to co-operate in the research project. The last two programmes were based originally on the ideology of the traditional boarding school model. During the 1950s these schools were training institutions with a strong link to the required skills of the professional practice.

The residential training institution is an old concept. It develops young people. Already, centuries ago, young people were educated within institutions to become members of the regular clergy or the lay elite (Prestage, 1928). Famous examples are the monastery school of the Benedictines, the centres of nobility for the education of young knights and the Jesuit colleges. These organizations as educational institutions, however, did not remain limited to the clergy and nobility. Soon the citizens followed. Subsequently, institutions were established for girls, and finally also for officers.

Until quite late in the twentieth century in Europe the residential training institution was a widely accepted phenomenon. They were institutions where young people were sent to be taught in the perspective of their future profession, for instance the position of priest or officer, but where they were also prepared for their role in society. In order to fulfill this position adequately, the learning and forming of certain behaviours was considered equally or even more important (Delpeoort, 1955; Lovell, 1974; Van Doorn, 1965).

Initially the training institutions showed family resemblances. Most of the pupils/students were housed in boarding houses owned by families. These families maintained close contacts with the educational institution. In this way the pupils/students were not isolated. There was open communication and social encounters between the pupils of the school and the local community.

As from the year 1600 the educational institutions increased their supervision of the boarding houses. This trend eventually culminated in the classic boarding school where we are only too familiar with from our experience and the literature. The boarding families were required to live in the close vicinity or even in the grounds of the institution. In the period that followed, the boarding families were replaced by personnel, a central kitchen was established and fences were put up. The family aspect had disappeared. The residential institution became an educational community in isolation (Ariès, 1962; McConnell, 1967; Trevelyan, 1949).

Apart from the historical/sociological development, we can also show some of the organizational characteristics (Goffman, 1961a). The first striking element is the above-mentioned isolation. Because of its isolation, the institution seems to enclose its members (pupils, teachers and other employees). The
rest of the world is kept at a distance. This distance is symbolized physically by closed doors, entry control, walls, fences, water, forests and meadows. These symbols indicate a barrier, a distance, a being different.

Second, this type of institution is a social hybrid, part residential community, part formal organization. Therein lies its special scientific interest. Third, it is a 24-hour institution. This is special as well. Our modern society is normally structured in such a way that the individual tends to sleep, play and work in different places, with different co-participants and under different authorities. To be recreating and living with colleagues is more of an exception than a rule. There are usually boundaries between these life-spheres. A striking characteristic of these training institutions is that these boundaries have been dissolved. All aspects of life are conducted in the same place, in the same location and under the same single authority.

Such an educational institution strives to maintain a hold on the way of living of large groups of people (Wakeford, 1969). In order to realize this, Goffman (1961b) argues, daily activities are schematized rigidly, imposed from above by a staff of functionaries and eventually combined into parts of an encompassing bureaucratic plan with the intention of fulfilling the official aims of the institution.

However, we should also include the forces of the outside world in this analysis. It is remarkable that, up until the Second World War, higher education was of little economic use. This situation changed in The Netherlands. In light of the reconstruction of the economy after the war, industrialization and the rapid development of technologies, the acquisition of knowledge received a higher priority than did preparation for a position in society. What the student knew was gradually considered more important than who he was (Bidwell and Vreeland, 1963; Janssen and Voestermans, 1984). The classical residential training institution, where behavioural control was an important element, was gradually disappearing behind the Dutch educational horizon.

More developments that have decreased the value of the residential training institution could be indicated. The idea of autonomy among young people, for instance, gained importance. Instead of the lack of freedom, the limitations and discipline that were imposed on the students, the free choice of entering into friendships became normative. This went against the primacy of the residential training institution.

Finally, this institution was declared taboo. Particularly in the 1960s there were many anti-residential sentiments. In The Netherlands this type of institution had become outmoded, authoritarian and undemocratic. It forced a family relationship by isolation and impeded the self-actualization of the pupil/student.

This change in the pedagogical climate coincided with an improved infrastructure, increased mobility in society, growth in educational opportunities and raised standard of living in society. Many residential training institutions, therefore, could no longer survive, partly because of the lack of personnel.

There are, however, still traditional training institutions left. They are alive and kicking even. We could think of, for example, the officers’ academies for the police, the fire brigade, the army, navy and airforce. The existence of these institutions is grounded on the special type of professions that require specific training and education in advance (Lovell, 1978; 1979; Racklin, 1991; Smith, 1988). Apparently these professional practices still require skills, the internalization of a role, that can be acquired only in (relative) isolation (Burggraaf, 1988).

The above list also includes Nijenrode, The Netherlands Business School in Breukelen (located between the cities of Amsterdam and Utrecht). Nijenrode was originally called The Netherlands Institute for Foreign Affairs and was founded in 1946. In those days Dutch entrepreneurs in particular were consciously searching for an educational programme modelled on the English public school and the American college. It is not surprising that the English educational experiences of the Dutch Minister of Education Bolkestein (during the Second World War the Dutch Government was accommodated in London) had an important influence on this programme. From the start this educational programme was meant to be expressly formative in nature – an environment that would develop a collective of young enterprising people who could adequately represent Dutch interests abroad. To emphasize the contemporary nature of this institution and to characterize the international orientation, one currently speaks of an institution with a campus.

### Professional socialization

In today’s society there is a large degree of interdependence. This interdependence is caused not just by our physical and mental inability to do everything ourselves, but also because tasks have been agreed which may not be performed by everyone (for instance, medical actions). Over the course of time these tasks have become standardized in permanent forms of co-operation (this is how
organizations originate) and have developed gradually into socially recognizable professions with a clear name and homogeneous tasks.

These professions perform the same professional tasks and have a certain common culture to which the members have to conform (Ellis and Moore, 1974; Van Maanen, 1976). In this way characteristic professional communities are established, for example offshore fishermen, army officers and medical experts.

What we have to realize is that a professional community does not have an egalitarian structure. Although collegiality and the common experience of values are considered important, the existence of such a community is of a whimsical nature. A professional community also has hierarchical levels, mutually competing groups and co-operative relationships with other professional communities.

The common experience of norms and values, in connection with professional practice, creates an identity. Members of the profession can see themselves reflected in this identity. That is why identity determines the level of institutionalization of the roles. The value of the notion of professional community, therefore, lies in the nature of this institutionalization.

Janowitz (1964) and Van Maanen (1976) point to the fact that, within the army, but also in service institutions such as the police and fire brigade, a strong normative integration is considered necessary for adequate professional practice. In this case, however, we are referring to organizations that operate on the borders between life and death. Therefore, members of the profession are expected to adhere to an ethic of service and far-reaching loyalty. It is thus not surprising that, in many countries, new members of the above-mentioned professional communities are educated in residential training institutions.

It turns out that two of the three campus programmes in this research (Higher Hotelschool, Maastricht and Nijenrode) also legitimate their raison d’être by the conviction that professional practice demands very specific skills and that professional community demands a strong internalization of specific norms and values (Burggraaf, 1992). An education in the context of a campus can thus, because of its (relative) isolation, achieve a characteristic professional development.

Research

A total of 384 students participated in the project; 229 first-year and 155 former students (one-year alumni). A distinction was made between the two categories in order to be able to compare experiences.

The data were collected by means of a questionnaire, developed on the basis of literature, interviews, observations and documentation of the programmes. The questions were aimed at the three life-spheres of students: housing, education and recreation.

With regard to the three life-spheres, in relation to the housing situation, the students were asked about their experiences concerning the acquisition of management skills. For the purpose of defining these skills, the views of Boyatzis (1982), Mintzberg (1989) and Selznick (1957) were judged on their relevance for the research. The views of Boyatzis were taken as our starting point. In his research, following Selznick, the competences of a future manager are measured – competences by which certain management roles can be satisfactorily performed. This means that, in the framework of these competences, no distinction has been made between social and management skills.

Boyatzis distinguishes five functional areas in which a manager operates:

1. planning;
2. organizing;
3. controlling;
4. motivating;
5. co-ordinating.

On the basis of these functional areas, Boyatzis has defined a number of tasks which are connected with the particular functions. On the basis of these tasks (and the accompanying competences) the outcomes were interpreted.

Among other factors, these tasks entail the determination of the goals of an organization, the determination of which people and which means are necessary to realize plans, monitoring the achievements of individuals and groups, providing feedback, creating togetherness and “spirit” in the organization and stimulating co-operation. Although the various types of student housing have been considered in the survey, the research focused especially on the comparison between students living in a student house and students living on a campus. We define a student house as a house where more than two students live together.

Sample survey

In applying the study-finance scheme, the Dutch Government distinguishes between resident and non-resident students. When a student is non-resident he/she could live in a
student house, in a commune, alone or together in an apartment, etc. One could also think of hybrid types of housing. In this survey the students were distributed the types of housing as shown in Figure 1.

As is shown in Figure 1, most students (38 per cent) live in a student house, 26 per cent on a campus, 19 per cent with parents and 12 per cent on their own. Also, when the educational programme offers halls of residence and when this type of housing is optional, the majority of the students still live in a student house. Further, it is interesting that the share of male and female students is approximately equal for all types of housing, except for the category “on one’s own”. It turns out from a sample survey that 19 per cent of the female students live independently, compared to 6 per cent of the male students.

Differences and similarities

In The Netherlands student housing on a campus and regular student houses can differ considerably from one another. On a campus the group of occupants is usually of a more homogeneous nature. Campus students usually follow the same type of study programme, whereas students in a student house usually follow different study programmes.

Students in a student house do their own housekeeping. On a campus, however, the facilities are maintained by the institution itself (in consultation with the students). On campus the students in general do not cook in their rooms, which is why they serve meals in a cafeteria. Finally, the two types of housing differ in geographical location: a student house is usually located in the city whereas a campus in The Netherlands is located at the periphery or outside the city.

Although student houses and the campus differ in many respects, there are also some similarities. In both types of housing the more established students apply entry procedures. By means of all kinds of rituals it is made clear to the newcomer that he/she will have to adapt to the rules of the game, the habits and the prevailing norms of the house.

In addition the students in both types of housing have a characteristic student vernacular, a certain kind of humour, a characteristic furnishing of the rooms and characteristic clothing. Older students can also create a certain atmosphere by passing on habits, procedures, etc. In both types of housing it involves a reasonably homogeneous group of occupants who are between 18 and 25 years of age and who are usually following a higher professional or academic educational programme.

The experiences of students

In the ways in which students are given the opportunity to acquire management skills (for instance, by means of practice sessions and didactical methods), it turns out from the data that the educational institutions differ strongly from one another. Most of the respondents, however, indicated that much emphasis was put on student self-motivation, the independent study of cases and working in a team. In the questionnaire the students were also asked what had been their motivation to start the programme. Students who live on campus more often provided motives such as making a career, self-actualization and interest.

From the inquiry it turns out that students who live on a campus develop stronger social skills than students living in a student house, independently, together, or with parents. The campus students defined these skills as increasing resilience, learning to co-operate, learning to take account of others, assertiveness, learning to set priorities, problem solving, acquiring insight into human nature, capacity to adapt, mutual understanding, dealing with people who are not automatically your friends and becoming more tolerant. Students of Nijenrode, The Netherlands Business School and the Higher Hotelschool in Maastricht, moreover, indicated that they developed their skills precisely because of the type of housing. In addition, according to the campus students, living on a campus has several advantages, such as greater conviviality, study facilities within close range, no long distances to travel and that there is always help from fellow students.

Although students living in a student house indicated that they develop social skills to a lesser degree, they also mentioned similar learning experiences to the campus students. Besides increasing the capacity to adapt, assertiveness and tolerance, the students from student houses specifically mentioned...
independence and learning to deal with people who have different cultural and social backgrounds as important learning aspects of this type of housing.

Finally, it can be argued that campus students and those from student houses develop more social and management skills than students who live at home, together or independently. Campus students, however, more often have conflicts about house rules (though conflict management is a good managerial skill), they more often organize unit parties and more often undertake collective activities with their house-mates. Students in a student house, however, more frequently: have a job on the side; decide on the admission of new occupants; discuss house rules; feel responsible for the atmosphere in the house and feel more responsible for the maintenance of the house (see Figure 2).

From the research it turns out that, first of all, the management skills campus students acquire (particularly those at Maastricht and Nijenrode) are more of a planning and organizational nature and include: the management tasks which relate to such a functional quality and the competences which are involved are the determination of the goals of the organization; the development of plans to realize these goals; the determination of how these plans have to be carried out; the determination of the required (human) resources and how these have to be structured; the formulation of achievement standards; and, of course, communicating this to others.

Second, it can be argued that the skills of students from student houses are more in the area of control and co-ordination. The tasks of a manager connected with these functions are the monitoring of achievements, providing feedback to individuals and groups, rewarding and punishing, stimulating cooperation, conflict handling and representing the organization in the external environment.

Other activities and work experience

Students who worked before starting the programme of study spend more time on their studies and are more positive about the contacts with instructors than are students without previous work experience. Students with more work experience are also active in extra-curricular activities such as voluntary work, sports and student societies than are students with less work experience. In that context it is interesting to mention what the other differences in interpretation are between the 229 first-year students and the 155 former students in the sample survey.

First-year students are occupied mainly with leisure activities (in the form of nights out). They consider the programme more difficult, think that their studies are not going too well, are less positive about the study-load, have fewer good experiences in dealing with teachers and work together less frequently.

Former students clearly indicated that they were less occupied with themselves, were managerially more active (than senior students), more often provided feedback to others, motivated people, more often functioned as representatives and more often had a job on the side. Senior students are simply more active. Finally, former students appear to be much better able to relativize the period of education.

Besides the type of housing and the programme, there are, of course, other aspects of influence on the acquisition of management and social skills by students, such as extra-curricular activities and previous work experience. Campus students, for example, are more active in the social life, such as sports clubs and student societies. These students more often have an administrative/managerial function in student society as well. Nijenrode especially distinguishes itself in this respect. This is not surprising because at Nijenrode active involvement in committees and boards is strongly encouraged. As one

Figure 2
Differences between students living on campus and those in student-houses

![Figure 2](image-url)
Female and male students

Finally, we investigated the extent to which there were differences in the experiences of male and female students. In general female students spend more time on their studies and are also more satisfied about the progress of their studies than male students. Female students are less positive about the contacts with fellow students than male students. With regard to the three campus programmes there were also differences between the sexes. The percentage of male students from the sample survey (62 per cent) is higher than the percentage of female students (38 per cent). Female campus students are also more satisfied with the progress of their studies than the male students. Female students are also more positive about their type of housing than male campus students. The inquiry further showed that male campus students more often have an administrative/managerial function within the programme.

Learning experiences and management skills

From the research it turns out that the types of housing – campus and student houses – contribute to the specific social and personal development of the student. Besides the educational and extra-curricular activities, both of these types of housing stimulate certain skills as well. It can be concluded that the skills which campus students acquire are more in the field of planning and organizing activities. The skills of students from student houses, on the other hand, are more in the area of control and co-ordination. We have to realize that, besides the compulsory nature of an educational programme, the groups of friends, the influence of a student society, the work experience of the student and also the type of housing for the student is organized form an integral part of the instrumental learning content and learning strategies within the programme.

Against this background, further research will have to be undertaken into the way in which an educational programme is organized in all its facets (for example Batley, 1969; Hatton et al., 1992; Romiszowski, 1981a, 1981b, 1984; Whetten and Cameron, 1991) in relation to the cultural and structural characteristics of the professional community and its work area. We have to ask ourselves, however, to what extent the way in which social life is organized actually contributes to the skills of the individual student. After all, a (future) student also feels attracted to a certain programme, activities and type of housing, because of his/her personality and character traits. The student will make his/her choice accordingly. This would mean that the skills mentioned, the potential for action, are not developed in a causal way, but that the already present skills are legitimized by the specific environment and circumstances. However, despite this causal relationship, student houses and campus do offer the student the opportunity to put certain skills into practice.

The question as to whether the types of housing – student house and campus – contribute to the development of social and management skills, therefore, can be answered affirmatively. We can thus expect something of our students and their potential as future managers.

Summary

From the research at three universities and four polytechnics it turns out that the types of housing – campus with halls of residence and student houses – contribute to the specific social and personal development of the student. Besides the education and extra-curricular activities, both of these types of housing stimulate certain skills as well. It can be concluded that the skills which halls of residence students acquire are more in the field of planning and organizing activities. The skills of students from a student house, on the other hand, are more in the area of control and co-ordination. So we have to realize that, beside the compulsory nature of an educational programme, professional socialization effects are also generated by the groups of friends, the influence of a student society, the work experience of the student and also the way the type of housing for the students is organized.

References

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