

Introduction

On the 17th of January the Leiden University Studentplatform (LUS) meeting on the connectedness of research and teaching took place. Aside from the eight student representatives of the LUS, there were 15 students present from all faculties, both Dutch and international.

The role of universities to educate researchers has been debated in recent times. It is questioned by some as to what societal benefit universities give their students by stressing the importance of research. Others are afraid that universities become too much akin to universities of applied sciences. Therefore, the LUS organised this club in the hopes to get an understanding of what students think of the research that they conduct and how it integrates with the learning they do.

Prior to the discussion, we invited two speakers to talk about their connections with the topic. Myrthe Sassen talked first about the initiative *Students as Partners*. She was followed by Roeland van der Rijst of ICLON, the institute that focusses on implementing policy for connecting teaching and research.

Talk by Myrthe Sassen

Students as Partners Leids Universitair Studentenplatform

Myrthe Sassen is a student assistant of *Students as Partners* (STAP). STAP is a student initiative that gives students the tools to empower their own ideas on improving the learning experience of themselves and their peers. These ideas can go towards innovation of education within particular studies, faculties or for the entire university. Groups of students come up with these ideas and can execute them in cooperation with members of staff. Through interventions students can determine whether their idea is actually achievable. Myrthe was curious how STAP could be better promoted and reach more students.

Myrthe has asked the students how STAP can be better promoted amongst students of Leiden University. Students advised to promote STAP by showing the results of STAP initiatives. This gives students a clearer idea of what ideas they could think of and at what scope these could be successful. On a more practical note, STAP could be promoted at the start of lectures or through blackboard. Ambassadors for STAP at each faculty would make STAP more visible to students and would give them someone to approach with their questions. These ambassadors could also promote their projects via university events. Furthermore, right now students with ideas are matched with teachers that can help them develop these. However, there are also teachers with ideas that would like to discuss these with students.

Talk by Roeland van der Rijst

Roeland van der Rijst, assistant professor at the ICLON Leiden and expert on 'research-based teaching and learning', spoke about research-based learning. Illustrative examples of research-based learning practices are students in research groups, academics as role models, knowledge sharing through student conferences/journals and knowledge exchange through research-based lectures. There are various teaching approaches within research-based learning: the emphasis can be on research content or process, and the emphasis can be on students as participants or students as audience. Research problems can stimulate student motivation and engagement, active learning, epistemological conceptions and disciplinary context. Van der Rijst concluded with the following take home message: research is and should be the core of our research universities.

General Discussion on integration of research

The integration of researched is experienced differently by students at the various faculties. First of all, at the science faculty, research is the core of education: students are educated to be a researcher. For instance, in lectures a general introduction is followed by a presentation of the research of the lecturer. And in the master courses, there are seminars in which you have to do a lot of research yourself. There is a big value for research, as it is the preparation of what they will do later. At the law faculty there are also courses in which you have to do literary research every week or criticize a paper of the teacher. But in general, there is very little research coming through. It is important, but still mostly used for argumentation. In the humanities area there is a lot of papers and research, included criticizing other papers, but it remains quite theoretical. In general, lectures are evidence-based and do not emphasise the process on researching that evidence. An example is when a teacher in medicine shows why a certain treatment had proved to be more successful than the other.

When doing you own research, for instance when writing a thesis, there are big differences in the quality of the supervision. Also, there is little opportunity to give feedback to the supervisors afterwards. Students need to have an important role during the learning activities about research: it's demotivating when it feels like teachers are just presenting their resumé by showing off all the articles they took part in. It is suggested that even in courses that are traditionally focussed on solely transferring information, research as a creative component should be stressed more. Old, set in stone facts can be enhanced by expanding on the ways those facts were obtained.

The discussion resulted in the following recommendations:

- Research should be more visible;
- Lectures should reflect the research behind its contents;
- Finding and evaluating research supervision should be made easier;
- Give students more creative control when learning to research.