

The state of Higher Education in Apeldoorn

...laying a road to an Apeldoorn University?

A discussion note

Higher education has long been the subject of intense debate in the municipality of Apeldoornⁱ, a fast growing new town on the edge of the central Netherland region. Due to Dutch government policy, formed during the past twenty years, Apeldoorn has struggled to attract and establish state funded higher education to the city, and even now that Apeldoorn has achieved a status of top 12 Dutch cities it does not have its own, state funded, multi-discipline, higher education institute. In 2009, a project, instigated by the Apeldoorn municipality, which would enable three regional state-funded Universities of Applied Science to establish a new institute, named “Kenloo”ⁱⁱ in the city failed after being unable to attract new students to the four niche programmes it was offering. A rather strained situation occurred between the municipality and the instigators of Kenlooⁱⁱⁱ (The Stichting HBO Consortium Apeldoorn), as different parties blamed each other for the collapse of the project. As it seemed, a great setback for the higher education ambitions of the city of Apeldoorn.

However if we look carefully at these ambitions, then we can establish that what Apeldoorn does have is the department of hospitality from nearby Saxion Universities^{iv}, which has successfully located in Apeldoorn and grown to over 600 students. The city also houses the headquarters of the Police Academy, which offers higher education to the branch in Apeldoorn and throughout the country and the Theological University with a student number of around 100. There is also an institute, called ProgreSZ^v that offers programmes for the social security sector at higher education level, and the Professional Photography College^{vi} has recently registered the name Hogeschool Apeldoorn and made clear its intention to seek accreditation of bachelor level programmes. Apeldoorn is clearly growing its higher education offerings^{vii} and it seems that even without Kenloo, Apeldoorn had started to fulfil its ambitions and create an atmosphere that would lead to new opportunities.

After the demise of Kenloo the municipality, urged on by employers and employer’s organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce and VNO-NCW^{viii}, started to look for alternatives, and in early December started talks with a privately funded, state-appointed and accredited University of Applied Sciences, Wittenborg^{ix}, based in nearby Deventer. In March 2010 it was announced that Wittenborg would move its entire operation, including the Business School to the “Kenloo” location in the splinter new ROC Aventus^x (College) building, next to the station.^{xi} The school would move immediately, and be supported and facilitated by the city council, including support in the realisation of housing for many of the 150 foreign students who currently make up 75% of the school’s student numbers. Wittenborg set out a strategic paper in which it described its ambitions to develop new programmes at both Bachelor and Master level and grow to 600 students in 5 years, with an emphasis on programmes for Dutch students. With this previously mentioned mix of state funded and privately funded higher education, Apeldoorn could be set to embark on the development of its ambitions to found an Apeldoorn ‘University’.

In many countries, notably the US, privately funded higher education is the norm, however often a combination of state funding, corporate donors and privately funded institutions bind together to create a synergy that allows meaningful higher education programmes to exist. In Apeldoorn it will be no different, and as the political debate intensifies in the coming year regarding the funding of adult higher education, even the borders between state and privately funded higher education will become less rigid, as will the differences between teaching (HBO) and research (WO) Universities. A University could be seen as an umbrella for a host of departments and faculties, either grouped into branches and fields of expertise and managed centrally, or a number of quite distinct colleges and institutions operating under the flag of a single institute or “University” and it is this that Apeldoorn could move towards.^{xii}, crossing the borders of the so-called Dutch “Binary system of Higher Education”.^{xiii}

The move to establish Wittenborg in Apeldoorn is the start of a process which should enable already established institutions to grow and work together and act as a catalyst to attract more institutions to the city, so as to enable the development of a plan to create a single Apeldoorn University campus within the heart of the city. Currently much talk is focussed on a number of issues – the need and requirements of the city of Apeldoorn, its population and the companies and organisations based in the region, and the actual location and centralisation of such a Apeldoorn University, around the railway station at the heart of the city. The Photographic College has already situated itself on the North side of the station, at the edge of an area that could possibly be developed, and Wittenborg, now in the ROC Aventus College building on the opposite site, a move which creates a positive inclusiveness of college and higher education and the start of an Apeldoorn University campus.

An Apeldoorn University could be created by forging an alliance between several Apeldoorn based institutions, with state funded and privately funded combinations, with niche and broad based programmes, with different target groups, such as school leavers, foreign students, adult learners and in-company schooling. The programmes at the different schools could include both professional taught degrees and academic research degrees. A number of essential criteria would need to be reached: its content and focus, its campus location and its services and facilities.

The content and focus in Apeldoorn, would be dependent on factors such as scale as well as supply and demand, dependent on the economic climate in the region, and of course funding, either private, public, or a mix. Scale would mean that the programmes taught and types of students in a city University Campus would mean that a medical institute for instance, with its requirement of a teaching hospital would not be possible, however that programmes in the fields of finance, management, economy, social sciences, information technology and information services, would be ideal in a city campus. These areas also seem to fit into the supply and demand chain affected by the requirements of regional employers; however this still needs to be unequivocally established. Institutes would need to be funded, either privately or through corporations or the state, and there would have to be a success factor that included accreditation, and a clear need for the programme by students, employees and employers. It’s no good launching a University on the basis of unrealistic marketing and sales figures or undeveloped products that fail to attract students.

The campus location would need to be central, close to the railway station and close to the city centre. Its optimal construction would be a complex of institutions linked by student accommodation and student facilities, including libraries, sports and recreation facilities and that these were within

walking distance of the education and learning centres, as well as local and national transport and the city centre itself. The area to the north of the railway station would be an excellent choice, and enable the inclusion of the ROC Aventus College on the other side of the railway, linked as it already is, both physically to the station and educationally through the location of Wittenborg within its walls. Wittenborg is also already in discussions with local housing developers regarding the creation of purpose built student hostel accommodation and also solutions that include affordable social housing in combination with student accommodation.

From the above it can be seen that there is a relatively simple way to start the creation of an Apeldoorn University, allowing various institutions to develop higher education products in line with the needs of supply and demand, and that if this is carefully managed and structured, that the process itself will actually enable Apeldoorn to attract more participant institutions. Institutes such as Wittenborg and Saxion, offering broader undergraduate teaching degrees should work together with the more specialised institutes, promoting higher education in Apeldoorn. Furthermore; companies and organisations in the region should be stimulated to participate and work together in their own fields of expertise and education to reach the goal of an Apeldoorn University. However, the key to success of the creation of one umbrella institute is in its management and a central role for the coordination of this project lies with the municipality and local government itself.

In the coming five years there is a tremendous opportunity for Apeldoorn to promote itself as a centre of expertise and knowledge, both in the Netherlands and the international stage, and attract students from across the country and the globe. It's time the ambition moved from the dream stage. For now Wittenborg is pleased it can join the development of Apeldoorn's higher education, and its staff and students will work on developing the ideas and goals described in this paper

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ⁱ [Apeldoorn - Wikipedia](#)

ⁱⁱ Kenloo comes from Kennis (knowledge) and Loo (the Royal Palace at Apeldoorn)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Stekker uit Kenloo & Balen van valse start Kenloo](#)

^{iv} [Saxion Hospitality Business School](#)

^v [ProgreSZ - Hogeschool voor sociale zekerheid](#)

^{vi} [Fotovakschool](#)

^{vii} [Het aanbod voor HBO-studies in Apeldoorn groeit!](#)

^{viii} [VNO-NCW - The voice of Dutch business](#)

^{ix} [Wittenborg Website](#)

^x [Dutch vocational education and training \(MBO\)](#)

^{xi} [Wittenborg Moves to Apeldoorn 2010](#)

^{xii} [University \(Wikipedia\)](#)

^{xiii} [Education in the Netherlands \(Wikipedia\)](#)