Recruitment and selection in the Netherlands

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Summary

An analysis of historical and current trends in recruitment and selection in the Netherlands shows that two types of professionals can be recognized in this field: the specialized selection psychologist and the more general personnel manager and consultant. The first pays much attention to the development and (psychometric) analysis of instruments and selection procedures, and their use. The second is directly involved in practical selection problems, either by carrying out or monitoring selection processes in work organizations.

A considerable and growing part of recruitment and selection activities is handled by psychological and other consultancies. Specific laws on recruitment and selection are scarce in the Netherlands, but several professional organizations have issued codes that regulate interactions between recruitment and selection experts and their clients. Frequently used selection methods are the interview, work samples, and the assessment center. Future developments concern analyses of supply and demand, construction of specific methods for job analysis and assessment, and investigations of the utility of recruitment and selection procedures.

Summary

Une analyse des courants historiques et actuels concernant le recrutement et la sélection aux Pays-Bas montre que deux catégories de praticiens peuvent être distinguées dans ce domaine: le psychologue spécialisé en sélection et le manager ou consultant dans le domaine du personnel. Le premier se consacre davantage au développement et à l'analyse (psychométrique) des instruments et des procédures de sélection ainsi qu'à leur utilisation. Le second est directement impliqué dans des problèmes pratiques de sélection, qu'il s'agisse de la réalisation ou de la surveillance des processus de sélection dans les organisations. Une partie considérable et croissante des activités de recrutement et de sélection est gérée par des cabinets-conseils, psychologiques ou non. Des lois spécifiques concernant le recrutement et la sélection sont rares aux Pays-Bas, mais plusieurs associations professionnelles ont publié des codes déontologiques pour réguler les interactions entre les experts en recrutement et sélection et leurs clients. Les méthodes fréquemment utilisées sont l'entretien, l'échantillon de travail et l'approche assessment center. Les développements concernent les analyses d'offre et de demande, l'élaboration de méthodes scientifiques pour l'analyse et l'évaluation des postes et des recherches sur l'utilité des procédures de recrutement et de sélection.

Introduction

One third of the population in the Netherlands, i.e. 5 million people, have a job for at least 20 hours a week. As 10 percent of the employed workforce changes jobs every year, there are roughly 500,000 transitions to be dealt with every year. This number, together with the yearly influx of 200,000 school leavers, determines the volume of activities in R & S. Only a part of the total number of transitions relates to workers entering new organizations, and therefore calls for both recruitment and selection. Career transitions within companies, which imply internal selection, make up the remainder.

This article describes the situation in the Netherlands with regard to recruitment and selection (R & S). These activities are approached from a number of perspectives. First, we typify R & S by giving a sketch of its history, its present infrastructure, and major approaches. Second, we focus on the professions that are involved in R & S, their role, their organization, their training. Third, we consider R & S practices and the use of various methods. And finally, we give an overview of current research and development with regard to R & S methods.

History

In the Netherlands, as in many other European countries, the interest in R & S as a separate field of activity developed during the early decades of this century (Roe, 1982). As an increasing number of jobs were affected by the introduction of machines, posing special demands on workers, and organizations grew larger, it became clear that R & S had to be approached more systematically. Employers became aware that the strategy of just «putting someone on the job» produced too high risks of damages and accidents. The labour market situation was changing. Since industrialized work called for fewer workers and, due to improved health conditions, the population was growing, employers had to be more selective in attracting workers than they had been before.
Finally, there was labour legislation. The "hire-and-fire policy" that had prevailed during the nineteenth century was limited by laws that restricted employers in dismissing workers, or taking advantage of "cheap" categories of workers, like children and women.

The need for systematic methods of selection, particularly methods that would reveal workers' capacities before their actual employment, meant an opportunity for Dutch psychologists to develop testing programs and found psychotechnical establishments. During the twenties the bigger industries opened their own "psychotechnical" departments, from which testing programs were organized. The national mining industry, de Staatsmijnen, was the first to introduce psychological testing. This company started in 1921 with the administration among lower-level technical jobs of the well-known Army-Alpha test and some manual dexterity tests. In 1922 Phillips founded its own Psychotechnical Laboratory. Other bigger firms followed shortly after. It should be noted that psychology was not immediately recognized as an independent discipline. Therefore the "psychotechnical" activities in the companies were in some cases conducted under the responsibility of medical doctors.

During the twenties and thirties a number of psychotechnical offices ("bureaus") were opened: in 1927 the "Psychotechnical Laboratory" of the Free University of Amsterdam and "Psychotechniek" in Utrecht. These offices offered testing services to companies that could not afford their own psychotechnical department. They also rendered vocational guidance services to youngsters and adults.

In the course of time a number of other professions than psychologists and personnel specialists got involved in R & S consultancy as well. First of all one should mention the engineers. Already before the first World War, engineers, who conducted time and motion studies, and analyzed working conditions in organizations, occasionally handled R & S problems. This occurred mainly as a part of their usual consultancy work: when jobs and conditions had been redesigned, the employer also asked their advice on the "right" person to fit the job. Analogous trends happened at later times among accountants and advertisement specialists. Several accountants succeeded in enlarging the scope of their activities from financial consultancy to management consultancy in general, including the domain of personnel management. Advertisement specialists entered the field through their concern with recruitment advertisements. A final word should be said about the involvement of the medical profession in R & S. On the one hand it lessened, as psychology became a recognized discipline and psychologists assumed responsibility for their own work. On the other hand it increased due to the social security provisions in Dutch labour legislation. It became a standard procedure for many Dutch companies to subject applicants to medical screening before accepting them as employees.

Another response to the changing needs of industry was the development of separate personnel departments within the companies. These departments, originally directed by lawyers, economists, and others without any special training, were created to handle personnel administration. Recruitment and selection, though, became a growing part of their work as well. The "staffing officers" that took care of the admission of personnel, continued to work along traditional lines, using such methods as interviews and references.

Infrastructure

The R & S infrastructure in the Netherlands still reflects the developments that took place in earlier decades. Nearly all large and medium-sized organizations nowadays have their own personnel department, staffed by professionals, usually designated as "personnel consultants". These departments play a major role in R & S. It is interesting to note that among the managers in charge of personnel departments one finds an increasing number of psychologists. In many smaller organizations one finds at least one person with some specialization taking care of R & S.

For Dutch companies it is standard practice to delegate at least a part of the R & S activity to consultancies. The consultancy business has grown considerably over the years, both in terms of the number of establishments and the volume of recruitment and selection activities. A first phase of expansion occurred during the sixties, when economic activity grew and the labour force augmented. A second phase of expansion took place during the eighties, as a result of the tendency within organizations to externalize staffing activities. According to a rough estimate over 400 consultancies are involved in R & S. Among them one finds a number of larger offices, some of them founded before the war, as well as a large number of very small offices specializing in a particular market segment, such as "hard-to-fill" jobs (e.g. in the field of automation), or managerial positions. Among the smaller offices one finds bureaus involved in executive search and headhunting for middle and higher level jobs. The offices can be divided into two categories: i.e. those that offer R & S consultancy as a part of a larger package of services, and those specializing in R & S. In both types of offices one finds psychologists involved in psychological testing.

Some figures can illustrate that R & S consultancy is a flourishing business. In 1988 the 83 consultancies that are organized into the OAWS (see below), had a total turnover of 110 million Dutch guilders (about 48 million ECU). Turnover grew 20% in one year, largely due to increased search and selection activities for higher level jobs. It is expected that this trend will continue during the coming years. Another relevant figure is that about one-third of these offi-
ces have existed for 15 years or longer, while two-thirds have been in practice for more than 10 years.

The largest private companies still have their own psychological departments. The same is true for the civil service, the police, the military forces, etc. Although they have other tasks as well, recruitment and selection are invariably a central part of their activity. Medical departments of companies and public health care institutions play a conspicuous role in the final stage of selection.

Approaches

After having outlined the organizational infrastructure, some words should be said about the way in which the Dutch approach R & S. Traditionally R & S is seen as an affair of the employer and the applicant, governed by private law. In principle employers have always been free to recruit and select people as they liked, provided that they observed basic principles of making agreements. There were no restrictions on the activities of consultants either, apart from self-imposed ethical codes, which will be discussed later, and a prohibition of two-sided labour mediation. Until recently this type of mediation, i.e. consulting employers and applicants at the same time, was reserved for public employment bureaus. The consultancies, however, always served one party at a time. A new act on labour supply (arbeidsvoorziening), that will become effective in 1991, will force consultants to continue their work on the basis of a licensing system.

With regard to the methods of R & S a consensus had developed over the years, at least among professionals, about what is and what is not an adequate way of working. Many of the methodological standards and principles, such as objectivity of examinations, reliability of measurements, predictive validity of procedures, etc. that were introduced by psychology, have been accepted as guidelines for R & S practice. There were some disputes about the use of tests during the sixties, and more again during the second half of the eighties.

R & S became a subject of public concern during the democratization debate of the seventies (for example: VAN STRIEN, 1976). The major issue was the weak position of the applicant vis à vis the powerful organization. Members of parliament brought the issue to the attention of the government, and the Minister of Social Affairs installed an advisory committee (Commissie Hessel, 1977) that analyzed the situation and recommended legal measures to protect the applicant. Employers and employee organizations, however, rejected the idea of legal regulations. They preferred regulations on the basis of joint consultation. This resulted in a number of private statutes and collective agreements. Professional organizations drafted R & S statutes as well (see below). A number of statutes and agreements are presently still in opera-

tion. According to a recent evaluation (COB/SER, 1988) they have had a positive effect on practice, but there is still room for improvement.

The eighties have brought some attention to the issue of discrimination, particularly of ethnic minorities and women. Except for a general article in the Dutch Constitution there are no special provisions to prevent minority discrimination. A report on the possible bias of psychological tests, recently published by a Dutch minorities interest group in cooperation with NIP (LBR, 1990), can be seen as a first step to reducing discriminatory practices. The discrimination of women is explicitly forbidden by a special act, i.e. the act on the equal treatment of men and women. The implications of the act for recruitment and selection practices are still very limited, however. Positive discrimination of women is increasingly accepted by organizations in the public domain, on the other hand.

There are two other laws that may affect R & S activities in the future. The first is a privacy act that regulates the way in which information about individuals should be dealt with. As this act was only passed in 1989 no experience is as yet available with regard to its factual consequences for the field. The second is the aforementioned labor mediation act, that will become operative in 1991.

The R & S professions

As has been indicated above two major professional groups play a dominant role in R & S activities, i.e., psychologists and «personnel consultants» (including «personnel managers»). This section describes the role of these two groups, as well as their training. Moreover a description is given of the major professional organizations in the R & S field.

Psychologists constitute the oldest specialized profession in the field of R & S. During a long period psychological testing was their major activity. In 1949 90% were still occupied by testing for 100% of their working hours (VAN STRIEN, 1988). Other subjects like training, performance appraisal, job classification, and organizational development only came to attention at the end of the fifties. Nowadays still many psychologists find their profession in R & S. Moreover they have contributed a lot to the technology of R & S (ROE, 1990a).

In order to become a psychologist in the Netherlands, one has to have university training. The majority of those working in the field of R & S have specialized in «work and organizational psychology» (formerly «industrial psychology»), or «applied psychology»). University studies are structured into two phases, a first phase of 4 years that prepares for the degree of «doctorandus» in psychology (masters’ degree), and a second 4 year phase that leads to a doctorate (Phd). As the number of places in this second phase is rather small, most students
only complete the first phase. The Free University (Amsterdam), the University of Amsterdam, and the universities of Tilburg and Groningen offer a full-scale curriculum in work and organizational psychology, including R & S. Specialized and less comprehensive courses of study can be taken at several other universities. No precise estimates of the total number of graduates is available, but a conservative (and very rough) estimate of the number of graduates for work and organizational psychology is 200 per year. The number of students involved in the second phase is over 30; some of them work on R & S issues.

The professional organization of psychologists is the «Dutch Institute of Psychologists» (Nederlands Instituut van Psychologen; NIP), established in 1938. In the first years of its existence the NIP directed itself towards improvement of the social and professional status of psychologists, as well as the protection of the profession against charlatans and quacks. In those days nearly all psychologists were a member of the organization. At this moment about 65% of all psychologists are organized within NIP. Many psychologists have entered jobs, such as managerial jobs, which are not specifically connected to this discipline. NIP has approximately 6,000 members, a small percentage of students included. About 1,000 of them are work and organizational psychologists.

In 1960 the NIP established an ethical code that regulates professional interactions between psychologists and their clients. This was necessary because no specific regulations within this field existed. The NIP code has been updated in 1976 and 1986, in order to accommodate societal and professional changes in attitudes and behavior that have occurred since then. Work and organizational psychologists have supplemented the general code by a set of conduct rules, and instructions for specific problems that may arise in the context of their practice. Among other things, instructions are given with respect to psychological reports, intrusion of privacy and confidentiality, non-discrimination and procedures for handling complaints.

Psychologists involved in research and development activities are organized in a special research association (Werkgemeenschap van Onderzoekers in de Arbeids-en Organisatie Psychologie, WAOP). Within this association, which has some 130 members, there is a section for the domain of personnel selection.

**Personnel consultants** and personnel managers are undoubtedly the largest professional group involved in R & S. One can enter this profession in various ways, but the most usual way nowadays is that of following training at a higher vocational training school. This training often takes four years, and has a broad scope. Topics relating to R & S are mainly dealt with in the context of other personnel activities, like career management. We cannot make any estimations about how many of the students in personnel management end up in the R & S profession since no such figures are available.

The majority of the Dutch personnel consultants and personnel managers are organized in a professional organization, i.e. the «Dutch Association for Personnel Management» (Nederlandse Vereniging voor personeelsbeleid; NVP). The developments outlined above led this organization to issue a special R & S code in 1981. The code contains prescriptions with regard to such matters as advertising for jobs, implementation of selection procedures, dealing with applicants, etc.

Continuing vocational training for practitioners in R & S is offered by several of the Dutch vocational institutes and training bureaus. Some years ago, the larger psychological consultancies in cooperation with the psychological departments of several large work organizations (e.g. the national railroad company, DSM, AKZO) set up a post-doctoral training program. This training is specifically directed to the junior psychologists who work in these firms and departments.

In 1983 an association was founded that specifically addresses the R & S domain, i.e. the «Order of Advisors for Recruitment and Selection» (Orde van Adviseurs voor Werving en Selectie; OAWS). The OAWS does not have an individual membership, but operates on the basis of institutional membership. Members are 83 consultancy firms with a total of 230 recruitment and selection consultants. Like the NIP and NVP the OAWS has developed a professional code for the field of R & S, regulating their activities with regard to their clients (employers) and candidates.

**R & S Practices and methods**

How are recruitment and selection carried out in the Netherlands? What methods are used? These questions partly can be answered on the basis of a number of surveys that have been conducted during the last decade.

Some information on recruitment practices is given in Table I, which is based on a recent survey among 70 large organizations (ALTINK et al., 1990a,b).

<table>
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<th>Table I: Recruitment methods</th>
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<tr>
<td>Job level</td>
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<td>Advertisement in press</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mouth-to-mouth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus Recruitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>R &amp; S bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>Search/Headhunting office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advertisements on radio/TV</td>
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</table>

N = 70; percentages of organizations using the methods «regularly» or «nearly always».

It can be noted that advertisements in the printed media are the most popular means for recruiting employees at all job levels (high, middle, and low). Informal recruitment, people passing the information on the vacancy from mouth to mouth, seems to be
widely used as well. The table confirms the tendency to use R & S offices, both general offices and offices specialized in executive search and headhunting, for recruiting candidates for higher level positions.

For information on selection we refer to a survey by GREUTER and ROE (1982) among 234 industrial, service and governmental organizations. This study has revealed that the most widely used selection methods are selection interviewing (94 % of procedures used), and the screening of application letters (64 %) or forms (27 %). The results of the survey by Altink et al. confirms this practice. The popularity of these methods does not imply that the Dutch prefer short-cut procedures of selection. On the contrary, it appears that in most instances selection procedures are rather complex and sophisticated. On the average a selection procedure includes 4 methods, and selection activities are handled by 3 individuals, either internal or external specialists (GREUTER and ROE, 1982).

Table II, borrowed from an extensive and representative survey study of 744 organizations in the following fields: industry, transport, building trades, services and health organizations (COB/SER, 1988, p. 40), gives an overview of some of the methods that are used in addition to application letters and selection interviews.

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>Large org. (&gt; 100)</th>
<th>Small org. (10-100)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical examination</td>
<td>83 %</td>
<td>39 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological tests</td>
<td>66 %</td>
<td>24 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference check</td>
<td>65 %</td>
<td>70 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penial antecedents check</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>12 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphology</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>8 %</td>
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The table confirms the widespread use of medical examinations during the last phase of selection, in particular in larger organizations. Its function is to reveal medical risks that may be associated with a (prolonged) execution of the job at hand, usually with the aim of deciding about the applicant’s admission to a pension fund or special sickness assurance. Psychological testing is quite common in larger organizations. Handwriting analysis (graphology) is not very popular in the Netherlands. The aforementioned survey study of Altink et al. notices a slight decrease in the total number of graphological analyses. Graphology has repeatedly been criticized as a selection tool. In general it is believed to be of little value, because positive evidence for validity and reliability is lacking and graphological reports are usually judged as intruding too far on the applicant’s privacy.

It should be noted that these results reflect the overall situation across economic sectors. As was shown by GREUTER & ROE (1982) there are marked differences in both recruitment and selection between sectors. A recent study by JANSSEN & KESSELER (1990) on the service sector has revealed that there are differences between types of organizations within a single sector as well.

**Psychological testing**

An extensive survey that was completed in 1982 by the University of Amsterdam (EVERS and ZAAI, 1979), revealed that in the Netherlands over 600,000 people were tested annually, not including children participating in national school tests. The duration of the test programme averaged approximately 3 hours 40 minutes per client. In terms of contemporary standards, the modal person in Holland can reckon on being tested three times in his or her lifetime! Although these figures demonstrate a clear popularity for psychological tests, it should be noted that various kinds of test use are included, i.e.: testing for educational and vocational guidance, clinical diagnosis and for personnel selection and promotion decisions by private and government organizations. If only selection and promotion decisions are considered, figures are somewhat less impressive, although they still signal widespread usage: in 1980 about 170,000 tests were administered in selection procedures, usually as one of the final hurdles to be taken before organizational entry (GREUTER and ROE, 1982). Table III presents some evidence concerning the use of tests for various job levels (COB/SER, 1988, p. 40). There is a marked contrast between higher and lower level jobs: with lower level jobs the use of tests is very minimal; tests are almost always used for higher level jobs. As the survey of ALTINK et al. (1990a) indicates, a frequent use of work samples is made for lower level jobs (about one-third of organizations).

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>Large org. (&gt; 100)</th>
<th>Small org. (10-100)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>98 %</td>
<td>88 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>55 %</td>
<td>49 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>8 %</td>
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During the last two decades there has been a growing interest in the use of assessment centers. The assessment center methodology was imported to the Netherlands in the beginning of the seventies, but at first it did not take root in the Dutch climate, amongst other reasons because neither applicants nor organizations seemed to approve of the competitive element of various group exercises. By now criticism has lessened, and assessment centers have become accepted practice. The actual use of this methodology is however less impressive than one might expect. In the survey by Altink et al. only 10 % of the organizations mentioned the use of assessment centers in the selection for higher level jobs. On the other hand,
about 30% of these organizations expect to make use of the assessment centers in the next years.

Consultant practices

As said, there are over 400 R & S consultancies. Most of them are rather small: only about 11% employ as many as 25 consultants; almost 20% must be considered as a «one man/woman» enterprise (SPROCK and GREUTER, 1987). As can be seen from Table IV, a majority of those firms is not equipped to handle psychological tests (SPROCK and GREUTER, 1987, p. 237, N = 91). It is evident from this table that a large number of firms are specialized in file search or active executive search. It is expected that both activities will continue to be of interest in the nineties. Also most consultancies can be characterized as interview specialists: the interview is displayed as a «specialty» by 4 out of 5 of them.

<table>
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<th>TABLE IV: Activities of recruitment and selection firms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Assistance in choice of media</td>
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<td>2. Advertising</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. File search</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Executive search</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Screening (application letters/forms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Interviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Checking references</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Assessment centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Psychological testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Graphology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing and evaluating procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Developing procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(no implementation by consultant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Global coaching without detailed implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Evaluation of procedures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research & development

The Netherlands take an active part in research and development in the R & S field. It must be said, however, that these activities mainly concern psychological methods for personnel selection. There is hardly any research attention given to recruitment and to such selection methods as the interview and references checks, in spite of the fact that they are widely used. Various studies deal with the construction of tests and scales, and the analysis of psychometrical properties of selection instruments (for an overview see: ROB, 1983; VISSEUR et al., 1982). Furthermore, as we already mentioned, effort has been spent on the development and application of professional (ethical) codes, and problems associated with the recruitment and selection of minorities. As such, the research in the Netherlands tends to follow the American and British tradition.

Research centers in the Netherlands

The main research centers can be found within the university structure. During the past decade, the Dutch government has stimulated concentration of research programmes, within and across universities. These centers should also allow for research training for students who have finished their master's studies. In 1989 such an inter-university network was set up for research in the field of work and organizational psychology, including personnel selection and recruitment («Centrum voor Arbeids-en Organisatie Psychologie»); CAOP). This research center includes a project that focuses on the development and psychometric analysis of tests and questionnaires for use in personnel selection, as well as a project on decision support. Another inter-university network has been created for basic psychometric and sociometric research.

A number of studies on personnel selection and recruitment are performed within various thematically oriented research programmes of Dutch universities. In addition, large work organizations with their own psychological research department and larger consultancy firms initiate various types of applied studies (for an overview, see VAN DER FRIER et al., in press). Major topics of research in this area are: development and validation of organization-specific selection instruments, such as the assessment center method; work samples and interview techniques; test and ques-
tionnaire revision, as well as the development of norms for these instruments.

Cooperation in the field of research and development takes place on a limited scale. There are contacts between universities, as well as between firms or consultancies and universities. But direct cooperation between several firms and consultancies is limited due to the diversity of interest among them. Cooperation with other countries in research and development is mainly restricted to the United States and the United Kingdom. Until now hardly any contacts with countries of the European continent have been established.

**Types of studies**

Generally speaking one can distinguish two categories of studies. The first category concerns the development and analysis of selection instruments, including «fair» tests, the second relates to the development of prediction and decision strategies. Examples of both types of studies will be given below. Most of the publications to be mentioned are articles and books in Dutch language. This is due to the fact that many of the research projects have been finished only very recently, and international publications are still being prepared.

It should be noted that basic psychometric research, e.g. with regard to models for test and scale construction, is conducted as well. See e.g. the special edition of the «Dutch journal of psychology» (Nederland Tijdschrift voor de Psychologie, 1985) and the work by Sijtsma (1988) on the elaboration of the Dutch «Mokken-model». Other examples relate to research on item and test-bias (e.g. Van der Flier et al., 1984; Kok, 1988), and research on the equivalence of test scores (Van der Flier, 1980; Sijtsma, 1986).

**Test development and test research**

The «Handbook on test research in the Netherlands» (Visser et al., 1982) gives a good summary of the efforts that have been undertaken with regard to the development and analysis of tests. Various test have been developed for the measurement of intellectual capacities and personality factors. The handbook, which is edited by a committee of NIP (i.e. the «Committee for Testing Affairs») gives evaluations of the tests available in the Netherlands, according to several standards. Among them are reliability, validity, and practical use. About 300 tests and questionnaires are registered in this book. This may be considered a conservative estimate, since this handbook is updated continuously.

Recent examples of test development with regard to personnel selection pertain to the construction of:

- Computerized adaptive tests (Schoonman, 1989; Zaal, 1987);
- Scales for the measurement of leadership qualities (a.o. with regard to the use of manipulative tactics; Altink and Akkerman, 1989);
- Questionnaires for use in selection (e.g. a sensation seeking questionnaire for personnel selection (Vandenberg and FeiU, 1988); and a Standard Personality Trait List (Hofstee et al., 1981; Smid and Zwindingman, 1986);
- Inventories for the assessment of preferences for different types of occupations (e.g. a translation and revision of the Strong Vocational Interest Blank; Evers, 1986);
- A broad battery of aptitude tests for Production, Commercial, Office, Technical, Policy Making and Management jobs (based on similar English language tests from SHL; Psychodata, 1990).

During the last year the interest of Dutch researchers in the development and analysis of work samples has increased considerably. Recent efforts within this area include:

- Elaboration of the assessment center method as a measuring device for managerial skills (e.g. Seegers, 1986);
- Construction of in-basket tests for (particularly) managerial jobs (e.g. Born et al., 1988);
- Development of work sample tests for various types of functions (e.g. for the measurement of administration skills; Van der Flier and Schoonman, 1989);
- Simulation of tasks for process operators (Ridderbos et al., 1989);
- Extension of the method of situation-response questionnaires to personnel selection (construction of a scale for the assessment of managerial achieving styles, Altink et al., 1988).

Another specific line of Dutch research concerns the development of selection procedures for (most often ethnic) minorities (Bleichrodt and Van Leest, 1987; Reynaert, 1988; Abell et al., 1989). Also tests are analysed with regard to sex bias (e.g. Born and Altink, 1988). As well, Dutch researchers develop tests and selection devices for use in developing countries (e.g. Altink, 1988; Bleichrodt, 1989).

As mentioned before, studies with regard to the selection interview are almost non-existent in the Netherlands. A relevant contribution to this area has nevertheless been made by Van Vianen (1988), who investigated this type of selection device with regard to the influence of sex stereotypes.

**Studies on prediction and decision models**

The number of studies on the development and evaluation of prediction and decision models is lower, but increases steadily. Following the developments of interactionist research in the field of work and organizational psychology, Greuter (1988) developed a
model for incorporating situational factors in prediction models for personnel selection. Recently, efforts have been made to develop computerized systems which facilitate the process of decision-making in selection (KOTH, 1990), and models which allow - at a more theoretical level - for combining professional judgements and objective scores (HOFSTEDE, 1989). Next to this, attention to the application of decision theory can be found in the construction of empirical utility functions for selection (VAN DER GAAG, 1990), and the estimation of the utility and pay-off of selection procedures in relation to practical applications (SCHOONMAN and GOEMAN, 1987).

Worth mentioning is that a group of Dutch researchers has commented critically against the well-known validity generalization method of Schmidt and Hunter. This group has made some suggestions for a better procedure for compiling validity data, testing the hypothesis of situational specificity and estimating true population validities (ALGERA et al., 1984; ROE, 1984; JANSEN et al., 1986). In addition to the aforementioned research, Dutch psychologists have been active in composing handbooks and reviews. Amongst them are: a frequently used student edition on psychological testing by DRENTH and SITTMAM (1990), and the voluminous handbook of ROE (1983) on personnel selection. Some authors (i.e. DRENTH, ROE) have co-edited the new handbook on assessment in organizations (HERROIT, 1989). The Dutch «Handbook on work and organizational psychology» (DRENTH et al., 1984), of which the Dutch-language version is presently being revised, covers various topics with regard to R & S. A number of authors have contributed to international reviews (e.g. ALGERA and GREUTER, 1989; AKKERMAN, 1989; ROE & GREUTER, 1990).

Current trends

It can be noticed that during the last year, Dutch researchers are changing their focus of attention from the development of selection tools to issues such as job analysis and decision-making. In the past years several methods of job analysis have been developed and applied - either « Dutch products », or translations of American/British methods (like the PAQ) — but these do not seem to fulfill the demands completely. Methods are sought which allow for diagnosis of « new » tasks (e.g. with regard to automation and managerial jobs), and differentiation between functions which at first glance seem very similar, but which in practice may yield different demands. Also, attempts are made to connect measuring devices to these new methods of job analysis (e.g. tests, interview questions), in order to achieve a direct match between the results of job analysis and the process of predictor selection. Furthermore, one can notice that more emphasis is laid on rational and efficient decision-making in selection. The utility of selection procedures is considered more frequently. For instance, with regard to the use of measuring devices, the less expensive and time-consuming method of « mini-assessment centers » is becoming more popular in the Netherlands. Research with regard to this measuring device is also growing.

ROE (1989) has proposed to broaden the scope of psychological selection by focusing on the selection procedure as a whole, rather than on the test or test battery. He has also suggested adopting design methodologies in order to develop procedures in a systematic way. His paradigm implies a number of changes compared to the traditional methodology. For instance, the needs of the selecting organization are analyzed and described before the design starts. Aspects of a non-psychometric nature, such as political, economical, ethical, and managerial requirements and constraints, are made explicit and taken into account throughout the design process. Another difference is that a multitude of design options is considered for each part of the procedure. As a pluralistic view of selection is adopted, this may lead to combinations of methods from different backgrounds, including clinical and statistical methods.

All this shows that in the Netherlands R & S is more than a domain of professional activity. There is clear interest in methodological and conceptual issues, and a great deal of effort is spent on developing adequate methods and procedures for R & S.

REFERENCES


Recrutement et sélection aux Pays-Bas

(Version abrégée)

Les activités de recrutement et de sélection (R & S) aux Pays-Bas sont décrites selon plusieurs perspectives. L’histoire, l’infrastructure et les approches principales sont dessinées. Les professions impliquées sont décrites ainsi que les pratiques et l’utilisation des différentes techniques. Enfin, une vue globale de la recherche et du développement actuels concernant R & S est présentée.

1. Histoire, infrastructure et approches principales

Comme dans beaucoup d’autres pays européens l’intérêt pour R & S en tant que domaine distinct d’activité s’est développé aux Pays-Bas dans les premières décennies de ce siècle.

Comme un nombre croissant de postes ont été touchés par la mécanisation (se traduisant par de nouvelles demandes concernant les ouvriers) et comme les organisations ont augmenté de taille, il est devenu clair que R & S devaient être approchés de façon plus systématique. L’occasion a été saisie par les psychologues de développer des programmes d’évaluation et de fonder des organismes de consultation. Dès les années 20, les grandes industries telles que les mines nationales et Philips ont créé leurs propres services psychotechniques. Les cabinets « Psychotechnical Laboratory » (Amsterdam) et « Psychotechniek » (Utrecht), parmi d’autres, ont été fondés.

Une autre réponse aux besoins en évolution de l’industrie a été la création de services du personnel distincts dans les grandes entreprises. Chargés d’administration à l’origine, ces services ont rapidement assumé des tâches croisantes de R & S.

Aujourd’hui presque toutes les organisations de moyenne et grande taille possèdent un service du personnel et il est devenu une démarche presque standard que de déléguer au moins une partie de R & S aux cabinets extérieurs dont on estime le nombre à environ 400.

Un consensus sur les méthodes adéquates en R & S s’est développé au cours des années. Une grande partie des principes et standards méthodologiques (objectivité, fiabilité des mesures, validité prédictive des procédures) introduits par les psychologues ont été acceptés comme cadre.

R & S est devenu un sujet de débat public au cours des années 70. L’enjeu principal était la position de faiblesse relative du candidat vis-à-vis de l’organisation puissante. Des mesures législatives sont proposées (Commission Hessel, 1977) mais rejetées par les formations patronales et syndicales. Une régulation promulguée sur une consultation conjointe est préférée. Il en est résulté un certain nombre d’accords collectifs et de codes, comme ceux de l’Institut Néerlandais de Psychologues (NIP) et de l’Association Néerlandaise pour la fonction personnel (NVP).

2. Professions

Deux grands groupes professionnels ont un rôle dominant en R & S : les psychologues et les consultants ou managers en personnel.

Les psychologues représentent la plus ancienne spécialisation dans le domaine. Pendant longtemps la psychométrie constituait la majeure partie de leur activité.

Pour devenir psychologue aux Pays-Bas, on doit posséder un diplôme universitaire en psychologie (maîtrise en 4 ans du PhD en 8). Les psychologues sont organisés dans le NIP depuis 1938. Aujourd’hui environ 65 % environ des psychologues sont en adhèrent. Le NIP compte quelque 6 000 membres dont environ 1 000 sont psychologues du travail et des organisations.

Les consultants et managers en personnel sont, sans nul doute, le groupe professionnel le plus important impliqué dans le R & S. La majorité appartient à la NVP. En 1983 s’est créé une association s’adressant spécifiquement au domaine R & S, l’ordre de Conseils en R & S (OAWS) regroupant 83 cabinets pour un total de 230 consultants.

3. Pratiques et méthodes

Recrutement. Les annonces passées dans la presse constituent le moyen principal. Le recrutement informel, le bouche à oreille paraisse fonctionner également. Il y a une tendance croissante à faire appel aux « chasseurs de têtes ».
Sélection. Les techniques les plus utilisées sont celles de l'entretien (94 % des procédures de sélection y font appel) et le tri des lettres (64 %) ou formulaires (57 %) de candidature.

L'utilisation des examens médicaux au stade ultime de la procédure est répandue, surtout parmi les organisations les plus importantes.

La graphologie n'est pas très utilisée au Pays-Bas. Elle est considérée comme de faible valeur en raison de la carence de données permettant de conclure à sa validité et à sa fiabilité, et aussi du fait que les rapports graphologiques sont habituellement jugés comme ne respectant pas l'intimité des personnes.

Psychométrie. Aujourd'hui un Hollandais peut s'attendre statistiquement à se voir tester trois fois au cours de sa vie dans des buts divers tels que l'orientation scolaire ou professionnelle, le diagnostic clinique, la sélection, les décisions portant sur les promotions.

Si seules ces deux dernières utilisations sont considérées les chiffres sont moins impressionnants mais signalent toutefois une utilisation répandue : environ 170 000 tests ont été administrés en 1980. Cependant la plupart des tests sont réalisés pour les seuls postes supérieurs. Pour ceux-ci, entre 88 et 98 % des organisations demandent des tests, tandis que pour les postes de moindre niveau cette demande se limite à 7 ou 8 %.

Les deux décennies écoulées ont vu un intérêt accru porté sur les besoins centraux. Tandis que les chiffres absolus de leur utilisation restent modestes, un nombre croissant d'organisations affirment leur intention de s'en servir dans les années à venir.

4. Recherche et développement en R & S

Les principaux centre de recherche se situent dans un cadre universitaire. Deux types d'études se profilent : d'abord celles portant sur le développement et l'analyse d'instruments de sélection, dont les tests qui respectent la personne ; d'autres relèvent de l'élaboration des stratégies de prédiction et de décision.

Aussi observe-t-on la construction récente de tests informatisés, d'échelles de mesure de l'aptitude au leadership, de divers inventaires de personnalité, questionnaires d'intérêt, exercices de simulation pour des postes divers, etc.

Par ailleurs on observe un développement croissant des études portant sur les modèles de prédiction et de décision. On peut citer comme exemple les études de modélisation interactive (c'est-à-dire la prise en compte des facteurs de la situation par les modèles utilisés pour la sélection), les systèmes experts, la généralisation des validités, l'identification des critères d'utilité, etc.

Ces dernières années, les chercheurs holländais ont transféré leur attention du développement d'outils de sélection vers les enjeux de l'analyse des postes et les processus de prise de décisions. On peut en conclure qu'aux Pays-Bas R & S n'est pas seulement un domaine d'activité professionnelle, mais tout autant un champ d'intérêt scientifique important.