

RSM Memoir

Berend Wierenga

Professor Emeritus Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University



This year, 2020, marks fifty years since the start of the Rotterdam School of Management (RSM). I have been affiliated with RSM for thirty-eight years (from 1982). This document¹ is a memoir of my time at the School. Hopefully, it is also interesting to others. It may bring back some sweet memories (“à la recherche du temps perdu”) for longtime RSM colleagues and earlier generations of students. The current RSM community may be interested in how RSM became what it is today, and if we can draw lessons from our past.

This Memoir contains my personal memories about RSM, naturally with a focus on the events that I was involved in. Therefore, it is not the complete story of RSM. I hope that someday a professional historian will write the official history of the School.

DELFT

When I arrived at the School, its name was Graduate School of Management Delft (GSMD), in Dutch: “Interfaculteit Bedrijfskunde IIB².” GSMD was an academic business school, organized as an “interfaculty”, set up by Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) and the University of Technology in Delft (TU Delft). My active involvement in what would become the Rotterdam School of Management started in March 1982, when I traveled to Delft to teach marketing classes twice a week. At the time, I was a

¹ I thank Bram Van den Bergh and Gerrit van Bruggen for their very useful comments on an earlier version of this Memoir

² IIB= Interuniversitair Instituut Bedrijfskunde, the administrative parent entity of the Interfaculteit.

faculty member at Wageningen University, located in the middle of the country. My appointment to full professor of marketing in Delft, already confirmed by the School, was on its bureaucratic way through its parent universities (TU Delft and EUR) in the direction of The Hague. In those days, the appointment of full professors was the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and required the signature of the Queen. The early 1980s was a difficult economic time in the Netherlands. The government had to make budget cuts, and delaying appointments helped to relieve the financial problems. My appointment was eventually signed by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands on January 28, 1983.

In 1982, the School had been in operation for twelve years. After a start in Rotterdam, it had moved to Delft in 1972 (see box). Because it was not an independent faculty (= school), professors were co-appointed at one of the parent institutions. In my case, this was the School of Economics of the Erasmus University. My inaugural address (December 1, 1983) took place in the auditorium of the Erasmus University in Rotterdam and at the occasion I was wearing the yellow colors of the School of Economics. The Graduate School of Management in Delft operated at a distance from its parent institutions, both physically and mentally. A full-fledged academic business school was completely new in the Netherlands and the faculty and staff of GSMD felt like pioneers working on something big. The School had been in operation since 1970, and the “experiment” was followed with great interest by the business world, the academic environment, the Ministry of Education, and the Dutch media. The educational program was markedly interdisciplinary and very different from the predominantly monodisciplinary academic programs in economics and social sciences elsewhere in the Netherlands. So far, the school had been very successful, with the numbers of students increasing every year. However, due to a major change in the Dutch university system the school could not continue in the same way. The GSMD admitted so-called “post-candidate” students, who had a candidate degree, a halfway stage between propaedeutic and master in the Dutch university system. However, this candidate degree was abandoned, implying that there would be no “post-candidate” students anymore. When I arrived in 1982, it had just been decided that the school would become part of the EUR, where it was to offer two programs: (1) a four-year pre-experience program in management (“Drs Bedrijfskunde”) for students straight from high school; and (2) an MBA program for students with work experience.

In 1982, the GSMD was a small school, with about 45 faculty members and 400 students. The ambiance in Delft was friendly and open, with a relaxed atmosphere. The offices were small but practical, equipped with yellow light Lundia furniture (later a cult item among Dutch intellectuals), very different from the typical heavy government furniture in most universities. The organization had features of an “adhocracy”, characterized by low formalization, with primary goals of innovation and adaptation to changing

environments (Minzberg). I had moved into an office with only a desk and an office chair. When I asked for more furniture to accommodate visitors, the Faculty Director advised me to wait until the late afternoon when most people had left. That was a good time to walk around in the corridors and pick up a left chair here and there. Formally, the school had three academic departments, but these did not play an important role, also because the partition of faculty members in departments was arbitrary. For example, the three faculty members in marketing were divided over two departments. Disciplines were mixed to foster integration. A secretary did not work for faculty members of one specific field (for example, marketing), but for a mixed group from a variety of fields. Adhocracies tend to have large support staffs to deal with the complex environment. Indeed, in Delft we had a relatively large non-academic staff (one third of all employees). The constituting parts of the educational program (“probleemgebieden” or “PG”s) were, apart from their academic content, run by secretaries/office managers. Secretaries were quite powerful in Delft.

Chronology of significant events in the history of RSM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1970 Interfaculteit Bedrijfskunde Start post-candidate program Bedrijfskunde in a private house in Julianalaan, Rotterdam • 1972 Move to Delft Office building in Poortweg, Delft Delft Graduate School of Business • 1984 Move to the F/G building on the EUR Campus in Rotterdam Start of the four-year pre-experience program in Management • 1985 Start of the MBA Program • 1986 Start of the PhD Program in Management • 1987 Faculty status: Faculteit Bedrijfskunde Erasmus Universiteit International name: Rotterdam School of Management (RSM) • 1999 Start of ERIM • 2000 Start of the International Business Administration (IBA) program • 2005 Move of the faculty to the T building (now Mandeville) and of the MBA/Executive division to the J building (now Bayle)

The faculty in Delft formed a colorful group. Their backgrounds varied widely, for example, from post-modern organization theory (Henk van Dongen), to optimization (Jo van Nunen), to systems theory (Gerrit Broekstra and Jaap de Smit), to artificial intelligence (David Brée), to public administration (Jan Kooiman). Cees Brevoord, with a background in accountancy, had been Dean of the School for many of its founding years; Piet van Berkel was a sociologist, who had worked for Philips. Almost all full professors had worked in practice. Harry the Heide was the former president of the largest labor union in the Netherlands. Jan Edelman Bos was a former top management consultant in the Dutch business scene. Hugo Bosch had worked for Unilever as a production engineer. For my appointment as full professor of marketing, the selection committee asked for reference letters from people I had worked with on projects in practice, to check if I had enough knowledge of the business world. This is quite different from today, when appointing and promoting our faculty members the important letters come from scholars who evaluate a candidate's academic abilities.

Given the broad variation in backgrounds of the faculty, it was obvious that the School did not adhere to one common methodological approach. Nevertheless, the faculty was able to offer a coherent and attractive educational program. Important issues were not discussed in the departments, but schoolwide. At the time of my arrival, much time was spent designing the future programs in Rotterdam, which required intensive interaction of the whole faculty. De Smitse (bar named after Jaap de Smit, who had been active in designing and furnishing the building) was the place for drinks with colleagues and students and to discuss daily news and gossip.

On the one hand, the governance of the school was relaxed, far away from the straitjacket of a bureaucratic university environment. On the other hand, it was the time of democratization and participation in Dutch academic institutions. The Faculty Council ("Faculteitsraad") was the highest decision-making body. According to a then recent Dutch Law³, the members of the Faculty Council were elected in three categories: academic personnel, non-academic personnel, and students. In the new school that the GSMD was, these democratic opportunities were utilized to their maximum, which often led to political tensions. The approval of the Faculty Council was required for subjects such as educational programs, the organization of research, the allocation of budgets, but also the appointment of associate professors, full professors, and the Dean. Especially in the case of internal candidates, this could create awkward situations. Politics was never far away. On my first working day at the School, I was scheduled

³ WUB (Wet Universitaire Bestuursvorming) 1970, replaced in 1998 by the MUB (Modernisering Universitaire Bestuursorganisatie).

to have a meeting with the Dean, but I received a message that the meeting was canceled. The Dean had resigned due to a conflict in the Executive Board (“Faculteitsbestuur”) of the School.

MOVE TO ROTTERDAM

September 1984 was the start of the new four-year pre-experience program in management (“Drs Bedrijfskunde”). In the first year, 100 students were admitted. From the start, the lectures of this new program took place in Rotterdam. A few months later, the School itself moved to Rotterdam. The return to Rotterdam and to the Erasmus University marked a memorable stage in the School’s history. Although the Erasmus University⁴ was one of its founders, the development of the Interfaculteit Bedrijfskunde took place outside the EUR during its first fifteen years. At first, it was located in a large private house in the Julianalaan in Rotterdam and from 1972, in an office building in the Poortweg in Delft. In this period of relative independence, the School had the opportunity to develop an approach and an identity of its own. Its curriculum and its interdisciplinary treatment of management problems was unique and different from what was done elsewhere. The School’s entrepreneurial drive also made it easy to start new ventures, such as the new programs for Rotterdam. In hindsight, the opportunity of independent development was a great blessing for the School. Creating something completely new is difficult from within an existing organization. This is also the case in the business world. For example, when IBM, the number one producer of main-frame computers, wanted to develop personal computers in the early 1980s, it created a special task force at a remote location. The resulting IBM PC became an instant success.

When it returned to Rotterdam in 1985, the School had built a solid identity and was strong enough to establish its own position at the EUR. For a comparison, the University of Groningen tried to develop a business school from within. The attempt failed and ended in a merger with the school of economics. Seeing the large demand for business and management studies from students, schools of economics at other Dutch universities opportunistically changed their names to “school of economics and business” or even “school of business and economics.” They never became real business school. Perhaps, the Amsterdam Business School (University of Amsterdam), under a former Dean of RSM (Han van Dissel), is coming closest.

Our first location on the EUR campus was a new, five story office building close to the metro station Kralingsezoom, and still exists as the F/G building. Economic times were hard, and there was no money

⁴ Actually its predecessor NEH (Nederlandse Economische Hogeschool)

for luxury. Perhaps, the university also thought it wise not to invest too much up front in this new venture. The F/G building was built with light materials, making it possible to communicate with your next office neighbor through the wall. In wintertime, the offices were cold and many colleagues, including myself, brought electrical heaters from home. On hot summer days, the temperature reached levels that were hard to bear. It was not until the mid-1990s, during the Deanship of Franse Leijnse, that air conditioning was finally installed. Apart from this, we enjoyed our new accommodation. Its human scale stimulated interaction and the Smitse had moved with us from Delft. Initially, we shared the building with the Faculty of Social Sciences and a few university services, but due to our rapid growth these parties had to move elsewhere soon.

Now that we were housed in Rotterdam, our name Graduate School of Management Delft was no longer applicable. Our official name in Dutch became: Interfaculteit Bedrijfskunde EUR. In 1987, after obtaining the status of an official school (“Faculteit”) of the Erasmus University, this changed into “Faculteit Bedrijfskunde EUR. At that occasion, we got our own faculty color (blue). We chose “Rotterdam School of Management” (RSM) as our international name. For the MBA program and the executive teaching programs, the label was Rotterdam School of Management from the start. Later, the official name of the whole School became Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University.

Mixed reception

Our reception at the Erasmus University was mixed. During the talks about the transfer to Rotterdam, the Executive Board of the EUR had come up with the idea that the employees of the Interfaculteit would have to apply for their own jobs. A resolute “njet” from Harry ter Heide, member of the Faculty Board, with a past in the trade unions, was enough to get this plan off the table. However, it did not help to create warm feelings for the EUR. On the other hand, the “can-do” mentality of the School may well have been a bit irritating to the EUR. It created tensions here and there, also because we were used to running our own affairs, and now found ourselves confronted with the “machine bureaucracy” of the Erasmus University. The School of Economics was not too pleased with our arrival. Having helped to lay the foundation of the Interfaculteit Bedrijfskunde in the 1960s, it may have been a bit hard to see their creation coming back as a potential competitor. One response tactic was to claim that “bedrijfskunde” was not a real academic discipline and would disappear soon because of its lack of a sound scientific foundation. Another tactic was trying to copy our success by starting an educational program under the name “Bedrijfskundige Economie” (best translated as “Economics from a business perspective”). Copycat brands (“B-merken”) seldom become a success; the students went for the real thing.

The sentiment in the School around this time is very well expressed by the text of the song “*Over en op de (inter)faculteit*”, written for the celebration of the School obtaining its official status of “Faculteit” in 1987. The text, attached at the end of this memoir, talks about the failures of the monodisciplinary approach ‘monodisciplant’ of other studies and hence the need for bedrijfskunde, the staff student ratio of 1 to 8 at the start of the School, the temptations of consultancy (‘adviseurschap’), the freedom in Delft, the return to Rotterdam (‘terug in moeders’ schoot’) and the difficulty of fitting in the EUR culture (‘een hoogst wanord’lijk stel’). At the same time, ‘wij geven het niet op’ (we do not give up), and, prophetically, if this growth continues, we will be number one (‘dan liggen wij op kop’).

DEAN

In 1986, the School was looking for a new Dean. Grand old man Cees Brevoord, having returned as Dean for an interim period, wanted to quit. None of the senior colleagues were able or willing to take the job, and then they looked in my direction. I figured that at some point I might have to do it anyway, and perhaps it made sense to step in now. The School was in a process of change, and I could have some influence on the developments. Fortunately, after my promotion in Wageningen, I had spent an academic year at the Graduate School of Business of Stanford University in California (USA), so I knew what a proper business school looked like.

Under the university regulations at the time, the appointment of the Dean of a School was completely delegated to the School. The Faculty Council elected the Dean, without a formal role of the central university administrators. After being elected by the Faculty Council, I made an appointment with the President of the University to introduce myself as the new Dean of Bedrijfskunde.

The Executive Board of the School (“Faculteitsbestuur”), starting in September 1986, comprised Bram Baumgarten (Finance) and Cees van Riel (Communication) and myself as academic staff. Tom Masselink was representative of the non-academic staff, (active in in-company projects and student placement) and Tom Buschman, a master student in finance, was student-member in the Executive Board. Tjeerd van der Meulen, a very dedicated person who had been a mainstay in the School for many years, was Faculty Director (Faculteitsdirecteur). We were a good team, fully prepared to weather the storms that we knew were coming.

We started out with a budget problem. University schools in the Netherlands get a large part of their budget based on the number of students. In 1984, the last batch of students (n=400) started the post-

candidate program. From 1985 on, this program no longer generated money from new students. At the same time, we had limited the admission to the new pre-experience program in management to 100 students in 1984, and 200 in 1985. This produced a temporary dip in student numbers, and therefore a large drop in income for the School. There were rumors that the School had to fire employees, and Rotterdam radio station (Radio Rijnmond) asked whether we had already started negotiating with the labor unions. In view of the planned increase in student intake in the coming years this was a nonproblem, but it took quite some effort to explain this. We were eager to hire new faculty.

A worried Executive Board

Many things were going on. The last students of the post-candidate program were in their master-thesis stage, requiring a lot of attention from their faculty supervisors. The pre-experience master program in management was in full development, and the same was true for the MBA program, which at that time had two variants, one in Dutch and one in English. Furthermore, new faculty had to be hired and the organizational structure of the School (temporarily working with eleven sections) needed attention. The School had its own way of dealing with all these challenges, characterized by many last minute (but just-in-time) solutions and a great capability for improvisation. It may not always have looked that well-organized and it is fully understandable that the members of the Executive Board of the University sometimes raised their eyebrows. On an evening in February 1987, the University President (Wil Koppelaars), who like us lived in Krimpen aan den IJssel, came to our house on his imposing bicycle to talk about his worries about Bedrijfskunde. I tried to be reassuring and asked him to have confidence in what we were doing. He had a cup of coffee, got on his bike again, and headed home. We never talked about that again.

Pre-experience program in management (Drs Bedrijfskunde)

Our priority was to finalize and roll out the program for year 3 and year 4 of the pre-experience program in management. The person who played a key role in this process was Henk van Ruller. Henk had a background in public administration and had previously been city manager (“gemeentesecretaris”) of Amsterdam. As an experienced networker, he knew how to get things done in the complex environment of a university. He also made the right observations. For example, I remember him saying: “Coming from the Delft program, our faculty only has study materials for two years, and now we have to cover four years.” Henk also initiated international student exchange programs for the pre-experience program and made sure that RSM became part of renowned business school networks such as PIM (Partnership in International Management) and CEMS (Community of European Business Schools). In 1987, he traveled, together with Erik de Leede, to China with 3rd year students. At that time, China was only a just awakening economic power.

On December 20, 1988, the School organized a symposium, celebrating the graduation of the first class of its pre-experience program in management. The program was very popular among students and a “*numerus fixus*” was imposed to regulate the numbers of accepted students. In 1984, 100 students were admitted, 200 in the following year, with the number increasing every year to 500 in 1988. Demand was huge. For example, in 1988 there were 2,900 applicants for 500 places. We needed this protection to deliver quality. In a good Dutch liberal tradition, admission was based on a “weighted lottery”. Every student with the right high school qualifications had a chance to get in, but the higher the school exam grades, the greater the chance of being accepted. This weighted lottery system was heavily debated by other schools of the Erasmus University. Due to the system, on average RSM received better students, and why should that school be in this privileged position? RSM’s current (2020) annual intake of students is 1000 for the Bachelor in Dutch, 500 for IBA, and 1500 for Master programs.

The RSM pre-experience program in management was a success from the start and immediately became leading in the Netherlands. Naturally, over time, it has gone through several reshuffling processes, including a partition into bachelor and master. Under the long-standing leadership of Eric Waarts, it is the largest and most prominent pre-experience program in management in the Netherlands.

MBA

The other major new educational venture was the MBA program. This two-year program was set up in 1985. It was comparable to the (two-year) post-candidate program from Delft in the sense that entering students already had an academic degree. However, in terms of structure and content, it was much more like other MBA programs worldwide, including the requirement of working experience for applicants. The MBA program was a private venture that had to be self-sustained by student fees, after an initial subsidy from the Ministry of Education. A separate legal entity (foundation), formally outside the Erasmus University, was created for the MBA program and executive courses, with the Dean of Interfaculteit Bedrijfskunde as Chairman and two other representatives from the Interfaculteit in the Board.

Like the pre-experience program, the MBA program also had an internal “product champion”. Jaap de Smit had a PhD from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, knew the international business school scene, and had initiated GSMD’s first international student exchange program. In the spring of 1985, when the School was still discussing when and how our MBA program would start, Jaap had already ordered flyers and brochures. Confronted with this *fait accompli*, the conclusion was that we had an MBA program and that we needed to get our act together.

In-house competition

The first years of the MBA program were not easy. As a newcomer, the RSM MBA program had to establish its position in the Netherlands and in the European and international business school community. It did not help that we had a competing MBA program on our own campus. It was initiated by the School of Economics and run by the Graduate School of Management (GSM) of Rochester University (USA). The program's champion was Eduard Bomhoff, a professor in monetary economics, and at the time a well-known public figure in the Netherlands. He had a weekly column in the NRC, a leading Dutch newspaper, where he shamelessly propagated his program. The Rochester program had the support of the Executive Board (College van Bestuur) of the Erasmus University. Apparently, the Board did not expect much from RSM's MBA program and suggested that it should merge with the Rochester program. However, our MBA program was growing, and we felt that it would be a take-over rather than a merger. When Dean Paul MacAvoy of Rochester came over to the F/G building "to talk about the merger", it was a very short meeting.

Rochester had started with an executive (part-time) program on the EUR campus. When, in early 1989, it also wanted to start a full-time MBA program, things got critical and we had to seek external support. We asked Harry Langman, the very first Dean of our School, and then a heavyweight in the Dutch business community, to convince the Executive Board of the EUR that this was not a good plan. We commissioned Wiek Slagter, a law professor at EUR and a private lawyer, to assess our legal options against the potential newcomer. Fortunately, in April 1989, a high-level international committee of business school professors ("Committee Daems") concluded that RSM's MBA program had potential and that the Rochester program contributed little to the Erasmus University's long-term objectives in management education. It recommended to the Executive Board of the EUR that Rochester should not be allowed to offer a full-time MBA program at our campus. This dramatic episode ended with Rochester leaving the EUR campus and moving its MBA program to Nijenrode, taking Bomhoff in its wake. It is interesting to see what happened next to the two schools. In the three-year Global MBA Ratings of 2019, RSM was 41st and GSM Rochester was 83rd. After all, Dean McAvoy had a forward-looking vision with his attempt to merge his program with the MBA program of RSM. With the Rochester issue out of the way, our relations with the School of Economics improved significantly.

Valedictorian in Europe

The fight about the Rochester program had taken a disproportional part of my time as Dean. In the meantime, the RSM MBA program was going forward. Much effort was put into the international promotion of the program, with Anita Noordzij, Head of Communication, as the driving force. On August 30, 1989, the Wall Street Journal published a ranking of the top twenty European business schools with the RSM as the number 1 (“Valedictorian”) business school in Europe. Suddenly, RSM became a player in the top league of European business schools. To mark the occasion, a T-shirt was printed with the text of the Wall Street Journal article on it. Erasmus Magazine published a photograph of a member of the EUR Executive Board, wearing the T-shirt with the ode to the RSM MBA program. The Wall Street Journal especially mentioned RSM’s “international business and computer science degree”. The latter refers to the MBI (Master of Business Informatics) program, which had been running for several years. This program, at the interface of management and informatics/computer science, was a visionary initiative of Jo van Nunen.

New department structure

There were many other things going on. For example, the School initiated the first PhD program in Management in the Netherlands. It started out in 1986 as a small program with seven PhD candidates and a limited number of formal courses. With Frans van den Bosch as its program director, it helped to lay the foundation for RSM’s scientific expansion in the following decade.

A more complex operation was the creation of a new department structure. The principle of mixing the different business fields started to be a problem. Employees were uncertain about where they belonged, and there was no fit with the organization structure of other international business schools. On a provisional basis, the School had worked with a partition in eleven “sections.” After lengthy discussions, in 1989 the School agreed on a structure with seven departments (“vakgroepen”): (1) Decision and Information Sciences; (2) Organization and Human Resources; (3) Marketing Management; (4) Strategy and Environment; (5) Financial Management; (6) Management of Technology; and (7) Methodology. After several overhauls during the following years, this basic structure is still recognizable in the current organization of RSM. These departments became the core organizational units of the School, the basis for teaching and research, and for the allocation of budgets and job positions. At the level of the School, the department chairpersons support the Dean in determining RSM’s long-term policy.

Retrospect

Looking back, I very much enjoyed my period as Dean. I learned a lot, and we have been able to accomplish a few important things. As a Dean, you do not only make friends. During my period as Dean,

I received a lot of Christmas cards from RSM employees. Unfortunately, not everybody could get a promotion or a raise. Early in my term as Dean, I wanted to have an idea of what everybody was doing. On Monday March 9, 1987, between 15:30 and 17:00, my secretary phoned all 93 faculty members of the school, or their secretaries. I still have the results. Twenty-six (28%) were in their office, 22 (24%) could not be found or were at home, 16 (17%) were teaching or in a meeting, 12 (13%) were working elsewhere, and the remainder had all kinds of reasons (abroad, conference, vacation, etc.). Not everybody appreciated this roll call. In a year with a tight budget, I skipped the Christmas hamper for RSM employees. The protests showed that this was a serious misjudgment. As Executive Board, we reported to the Faculty Council and these monthly meetings were interesting, sometimes tense, events. The student delegation was the most constructive. They wanted the School to go forward and did not have personal work interests. Members of the faculty delegation sometimes resorted to demagogic rhetoric against proposed changes, but a no-confidence motion never reached a majority. There were complaints that the Faculty Council was losing its influence on the MBA program. That was correct, and necessarily so. The faculty had to accept that MBA teaching required special skills and that the MBA program was not an employment project for redundant RSM faculty members. This democratic bottom-up system of the time, with a large influence from the base of the organization, had evident drawbacks. On the other hand, today's system, top-down from the Executive Board of the University may cause a lack of commitment at the basis and the application of control procedures that do not match well with the real goals of teaching and research.

As regards the EUR Executive Board, notwithstanding our sometimes different visions about RSM, my personal relations with Wil Koppelaars, Alexander Rinnooy Kan, and Hans Stam remained excellent. We were able to separate business issues from personal ones and respected each other's positions and responsibilities. The monthly meetings of the College of the Deans, chaired by Rector Magnificus Alexander Rinnooy Kan, were professional and pleasant. Over time, RSM gained appreciation and recognition in the EUR community. In 1988, on the recommendation of RSM, the Erasmus University awarded an Honorary Doctor Degree to Professor Anton Dreesmann, a Dutch business tycoon in services and retailing. I was proud to be the Honorary Promotor at that occasion.

I did not want to serve a second term as Dean, because I wanted to go back to my marketing habitat and to research. On September 21, 1989, I handed over the Deanship to Piet van Berkel.

CONSOLIDATION AND NEW STEPS

For the School, the 1990s started with a period of consolidation. The new educational programs were implemented, and the new department structure had to be consolidated. A constant factor was the growth of the School. In 1991, 700 new students were admitted in the pre-experience program in management. There was a continuous inflow of new faculty and of staff for supporting services. The School invested in a Public Relations office, an office for contacts with business and alumni, and put much effort in expanding the programs for the international exchange of students (IMSEC, PIM, CEMS).

I was glad to return to marketing. During my Deanship, I had remained chairman of the marketing department, but with limited time for what was going on. My colleagues, especially Ad Pruyn, Ale Smidts, Jan Vollerling, and Eric Waarts, did a terrific job in keeping things going. There was a quickly growing demand for marketing courses and for graduating in marketing.

In addition to teaching, our department needed to step up its research activities. To start with a fresh mind and to explore new subjects, during the academic year 1989-1990 I spent two visiting periods abroad, one at the Wharton School (University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia) and the other at INSEAD (Fontainebleau).

The integrating theme for the research program of the marketing department became: Decision Making in Marketing, with (i) Decision Processes of Consumers; and (ii) Decision Processes of Marketers. My own specific topic was Marketing Decision Support Systems, which included data analysis, model building, statistics/econometrics, expert systems, and artificial intelligence. I worked with several PhD students on these topics and we were able to publish quite a few articles in top journals. A comprehensive work was the monograph "Marketing Management Support Systems" (Kluwer Academic Publishers; 2000), with Gerrit van Bruggen. In this period, I devoted more time to interaction with practice. I accepted a position as external board member ("commissaris") at a large agribusiness company (Cehave), advisory roles at other companies, and I was active in the Executive RSM-Rabobank MBA program. Furthermore, we were extremely happy when Unilever donated the "Unilever-Erasmus Visiting Professorship in Marketing." During a five-year period (1992-1997), we invited prominent marketing scholars from abroad for a year's stay Rotterdam. These colleagues came from the USA (Wharton, Berkeley and New York University), Japan, and Australia. Apart from chairman of the marketing department, my administrative duties in the School were limited. I was chairman of the Corporate Communication Foundation (the institutional body for Cees van Riel's successful Corporate Communication Centre), board member of the Rotterdam School of Management Foundation, and member of the Faculty Council. In 1995, it was RSM's turn to deliver the Dies Address of the Erasmus University and on November 8,

1995, I had the honor to give a speech with the title: “The manager walking the tightrope between hard data and soft knowledge.” (“De managers als koorddanser tussen harde data en zachte kennis”). Wim Kok, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, was in the audience.

Scandal

In 1992, RSM was implicated in a scandal about payments to professors on top of their regular salary for teaching in the MBA program and in executive programs. This news was met with public outrage, from academics, journalists, and politicians. In retrospect, RSM was the top of an iceberg. In the ensuing debate, the phenomenon of university professors with earnings from side jobs (“bijklussende hoogleraren”) turned out to be very common in the Dutch university community, also in medical schools. The problem was a lack of registration, transparency, and accountability. In later years, universities were required to register information about side jobs of professors and make this publicly available. In the meantime, the opinions on this subject have changed and the interaction between academia and the outside world is often seen as a positive sign of societal involvement. However, in the early 1990s, it resulted in an administrative crisis for RSM, with two Deans stepping down, and with even the appointment of two temporary external administrators. Furthermore, the organization was changed, by placing the division for MBA and Executive Programs at a larger administrative distance from the rest of the School.

In 1994, Frans Leijnse became the first external Dean of RSM. As a sociologist, Frans had a PhD from the University of Twente, but his most recent previous job had been in politics, as deputy chairman of the labor party group in the Dutch parliament. Frans Leijnse did an excellent job in bringing the School back in calm waters. He also introduced additional HRM structure, for example by initiating annual reviews of professors. Under Frans Leijnse’s Deanship, the Q building was created as a facility for executive teaching. In my recollection, in these years the most developed and visible departments of the School were Decision and Information Sciences (with Jo van Nunen as chairman), Strategy and Environment (with Frans van den Bosch as chairman) and our department of Marketing Management. With the arrival of Kees Koedijk in the late 1990s, Finance & Accounting got a boost. The same happened to Organizational Behavior, with the appointment of Daan van Knippenberg a few years later.

The next Dean, starting in 1997, was Paul Verhaegen. Paul had a PhD in Finance from the Erasmus School of Economics and had worked at the Ministry of Finance and the Netherlands Employers Association (VNO-NCW). Paul Verhaegen was a visionary Dean, perhaps the most visionary RSM ever had. In his view, RSM had to move forward to its next level and he set out and implemented a strategy for

that purpose. First, the School had to become more international. Apart from the MBA program, most education programs were still in Dutch, except courses for exchange students. Paul set up the program in International Business Administration (IBA), fully taught in English. In terms of content, this program was a one-to-one English version of the existing pre-experience program in management in Dutch. The IBA program (started in 2000) became a great success from the start and to this day a “numerus fixus” is needed to keep the student numbers manageable. Its first Academic Director was Harald Benink, and for many years the program was successfully run by Adri Meijdam as Executive Director. At the start, the IBA program was organized as a joint venture with Erasmus School of Economics. Later, it became an RSM program only.

Paul’s second strategy was more focus on research. He played a decisive role in getting the research school ERIM off the ground. This will be elaborated in the next section. Furthermore, Paul hired new professors in the areas of finance/accounting and organization, two areas of the school in need of strengthening. Unfortunately, Paul Verhaegen was not the greatest diplomat. His straightforward approach was not always appreciated, especially not by the Executive Board of the EUR. However, his contributions have been most beneficial for RSM.

LEAP FORWARD TO A RESEARCH-DRIVEN SCHOOL

During its first twenty-five years, education was the dominant process in RSM and its predecessor the Delft Graduate School of Management. Fortunately, most faculty members had PhDs which guaranteed an academic climate in the School. Many faculty members had a genuine scientific curiosity, and besides their teaching duties, worked on research projects. Often, these projects were ad hoc, applied, and noncommittal, but occasionally there were excellent publications. A faculty member would receive a bottle of first-class wine from Dean Frans Leijne for a paper in a top journal. Since 1986, RSM has had a PhD program in Management, supported by a small PhD office in the School.

For a top-ranking business school, more efforts in research were needed. Fortunately, external factors came to the help. Money for Dutch universities comes in two parts, one for teaching, and one for research. Teaching money is based on numbers of students and graduations. Until the 1980s, there was no obligation to account for research money. This changed when the government ordained that academic research should take place in so-called research schools (“onderzoekscholen”). These research schools had to be officially recognized by the KNAW⁵, as the condition for receiving research money. To remain

⁵ “Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie voor Wetenschappen” (Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences)

assured of its money for research, RSM had to get its act together. In 1995, it created a research school (ERASM) and submitted a request for its recognition by the KNAW, unfortunately without success. When Paul Verhaegen arrived as Dean, he saw the importance for RSM to become stronger in research and decided that a new attempt should be made. For more mass, he proposed to join forces with the Erasmus School of Economics (ESE). The ESE groups in business-related fields and in optimization were interested in working with RSM. In a pressure-cooker approach, with RSM and ESE professors getting together in a series of 8 o'clock Monday morning meetings, Paul was able to get everyone to agree on the creation of a new, joint research school, the Erasmus Research Institute of Management (ERIM). Fred van Raaij (RSM) and Philip Hans Franses (ESE) were commissioned to write a proposal which was submitted to the KNAW. This time, the proposal was not rejected right away, but came back with a series of questions. Paul asked me to write a revised version of the proposal which was to be defended during an interview at the KNAW. On March 29, 1999, we were invited to the KNAW premises in Amsterdam. We hired a minibus, and with a squadron of professors from RSM and ESE (including the two Deans), we went to Amsterdam to defend our case. In June 1999, ERIM was officially recognized by the KNAW.

ERIM

On October 20, 1999, ERIM was officially launched in an Inaugural Meeting in the Faculty Club. I was appointed as the first Scientific Director, a position that I would hold until 2004. At the start, the ERIM team consisted besides myself of Albert Wagelmans (Associate Scientific Director), Gerrit van Bruggen (PhD Director), and Wilfred Mijnhardt (General Secretary). In March 2000, Tineke van der Vhee joined as Office Manager. It was a challenge to develop the instruments and tools to stimulate research and to guide it into the direction of high-quality publications. ERIM distinguished five areas of research, represented by five ERIM programs (LIS, ORG, MKT, F&A, and STR). Faculty members could become ERIM member if their output in terms of publications met certain criteria. The ERIM Membership Charter described the precise conditions. To classify the journals which would qualify for ERIM membership, we compiled the ERIM Journal List, consisting of "primary journals" and "secondary journals". A separate category within primary journals was "star journals", the absolute top journals in each domain. The decision whether to include a journal in the list, and in what category, was a sensitive issue, because faculty members with a publication history in a specific journal, obviously wanted that journal to be high on the ERIM Journal List.

ERIM not only set thresholds that researchers had to pass for qualification, but it also offered support and incentives to achieve this. A broad set of ERIM Support Programs was developed for this purpose offering financial means, for example for research assistants, for research visits (inbound and outbound),

for the organization of seminars and workshops, for the editing of scientific tests, for data collection and software, and the ERIM Report Series. There were specific ERIM support programs for PhD students. Furthermore, we initiated a series of ‘ERIM Awards’, including the ERIM Award for Outstanding Performance by a Young Researcher, ERIM Top Article Award, ERIM Book Award, and ERIM Impact Award. The existing PhD program was made much more substantive with a comprehensive program of PhD courses, differentiated according to the five ERIM Programs. In addition, a two-year ERIM Research Master was introduced.

Around 2000, laboratory experiments became prominent in the international business school world. The ERIM research groups in marketing and organizational behavior, and later also those in information management and finance needed laboratory facilities. ERIM persuaded the Dean of RSM to sacrifice a few meeting rooms in the Q-building to start a first lab with modest facilities. When Erasmus University set up an Institute of Psychology, I contacted the future Dean of this school (Henk Schmidt) and we agreed that our schools would together submit a proposal to the EUR Executive Board for a well-equipped and professional lab in the new T building. Fortunately, the Executive Board honored our request and to this day the Erasmus Behavioral Lab, now with seven lab types, on the 12th floor of what is now the Mandeville building, is of enormous importance for the research of RSM, the Institute of Psychology, and several other research groups on campus.

Game changer

ERIM was a game changer for RSM. It created an atmosphere in the School of intellectual curiosity in the business subjects that we were teaching and an eagerness to contribute to the body-of-knowledge about business phenomena in journals, books, and conferences. A lively exchange developed with faculty from prominent business schools abroad through research visits, research seminars, jointly authored papers, and co-supervision of PhD students. Many ERIM PhD students spent one or two semesters abroad during their PhD education. Publications in international top journals increased and with it the international recognition of RSM as research-driven school. The average number of articles in international scientific journal by RSM faculty members rose from 27 in the period 1992-1995 to 103 in the period 2000-2003⁶. In the Financial Times Ranking 2003, the Rotterdam School of Management was in Europe’s top 3 of best management research (based on publications in 35 international journals).

⁶ ERIM The First Accreditation Period (1999-2003) and Beyond December 2003, p 347

It was not out of pure intellectual curiosity that the RSM faculty made this leap forward towards high quality research. The incentive system helped. RSM faculty who were ERIM members, received research vouchers of 0.4 FTE (“star members” received 0.6 FTE). Faculty without ERIM vouchers retained minimal research time and would practically become fulltime teachers. This voucher system, combined with a strict tenure and promotion procedure, with ERIM achievements as an important requirement, helped to build up a research-driven faculty. Colleagues who were not very strong in research saw few career opportunities at RSM and tended to leave. And it became attractive for departments to hire new faculty with strong research capabilities, because they generated money through their ERIM vouchers. RSM does not hire its own PhDs. New faculty comes from outside and it is important to be attractive as a School for high potential candidates. In this respect, the research climate of the School and the presence of ERIM with its many research facilities act as strong trump cards. Over the last twenty years, RSM has been able to attract faculty from renowned universities all over the world. RSM is especially attractive for young PhDs as an environment to further develop their research and teaching skills.

The fast turnaround can be illustrated with data about the marketing department. A department report⁷ lists the publications by the department faculty members in the two-year period 1992-1993. In these two years, the 11 faculty of that time produced 104 publications: 36 conference papers, 27 articles in Dutch journals/magazines, 15 research reports, 15 books or chapters in books, 9 reports for external client-organizations and 2 articles in international journals. Of the two publications in international journals, only one is listed in the later ERIM Journal List (as a secondary journal). These numbers can be compared with the data about the publications of the ERIM members of the RSM marketing department over the five-year period 1999-2003⁸. At that time there were eleven⁹ ERIM members in the marketing department and they published 19 papers in ERIM P* journals (primary star), 8 papers in ERIM primary journals, and 10 papers in ERIM secondary journals. So, ten years later the output was of a much higher level in terms of quality outlets. Researchers are taking the extra step to go through the (often) arduous procedures of submission/rejections/revision to get their work in the more prestigious journals. At the same time, there was a major shift in the composition of the marketing department. Of the ERIM faculty members in 2003, only four were already present in 1992-93; all the others were new. The picture for marketing is probably representative for the transition that took place in research in other RSM departments.

⁷ Information Brochure of the Department of Marketing Management, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, First release 1.0 January 1994

⁸ ERIM The First Accreditation Period (1999-2003) and Beyond December 2003, p 219-231

⁹ Part-time faculty members and their output were counted for 50%

The enduring cooperation between RSM and ESE in ERIM has been very successful. In terms of researchers, output, and financial contribution the division is about two-thirds RSM and one-third ESE. Over the years, the Deans of RSM and ESE have been generous towards ERIM, in terms of organizational as well as financial support.

In the fall of 2003, ERIM was evaluated by an International Peer Review Committee. Their report was unambiguously positive: “ERIM can realistically aim to become one of the best global institutions for research in management¹⁰.” Based on this report, in 2004, ERIM was re-accredited by the KNAW for the next five years. For me the time had come to step aside. Ale Smidts became my successor as Scientific Director of ERIM. Ale, and later his successor, Marno Verbeek, and now Pursey Heugens have taken ERIM to ever greater heights.

CONTINUATION

During my ERIM responsibilities, I had limited time for my marketing field. Nevertheless, I was actively involved in the organization of two major international marketing conferences that we hosted in Rotterdam. In 2000 the Annual EMAC (European Marketing Academy) Conference was held here, and in 2004 we had the Marketing Science Conference (INFORMS). Both conferences, organized together with the marketing group of ESE, brought over five hundred marketing scholars from all over the world to the Erasmus University.

After stepping down as Scientific Director of ERIM, I left for Philadelphia (USA) to spend a semester as visiting professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. I had been there before and had developed an enjoyable working relationship with my colleague Josh Eliashberg. With Gerrit van Bruggen, who had taken over as chairman in 2002, the marketing department was in very good hands. Gerrit made excellent hires, including Stijn van Osselaer and Stefano Puntoni, and the department was doing fine. Research was booming and student demand for courses and master thesis coaching in marketing remained high.

On returning to Rotterdam in 2005, I was glad to get back to research again. In this period, I had two major lines of investigation. First, following my earlier work on marketing management support systems, I was interested in managerial decision-making in marketing, i.e., how marketers make decisions and how

¹⁰ ERIM The First Accreditation Period (1999-2003) and Beyond December 2003, p 343

their decision-making can be improved. Projects together with Stijn van Osselaer and two PhD students resulted in high-level publications on this topic. I also taught a PhD Course “Managerial Decision Making and Decision Support.” Second, together with Josh Eliashberg, Chuck Weinberg (from UBC Vancouver), and several other colleagues, I worked on the optimization of movie scheduling in cinemas. We were successful in developing systems that helped movie theaters planners decide which movies to show in which screening rooms and at what times. With this work we won a best paper award at a major marketing journal, and we were able to realize implementations in practice.

In the meantime, in 2005 the School had moved to a new location, a tall elegant building on the Woudestein campus. RSM occupied the first 11 floors. This T building, as it was called (now Mandeville) was a major improvement compared to the modest premises of the F/G building. Unfortunately, the MBA and Executive Education division of the School did not move with us and went to a different location on campus, the J building (now Bayle). This physical separation is a major hurdle to the “one school” concept that successive deans have been actively working on.

At this time, I was active in NWO¹¹, a large governmental funding organization for scientific research in the Netherlands, where researchers can submit research proposals. As we all know, science has a (tacit) picking order. Physics is on top, next come the other natural sciences, then the social sciences, with research in management almost in the lowest position. I was on the board of the social and behavioral sciences division of NWO (called “MAGW”¹²), where psychology claimed the role of leading discipline (It was before the incidents in that field), looking down on “applied” fields such as research in management. The latter domain has a difficult time in NWO. Experimental work (labs) has the best chances, because of the familiar “scientific” methodology. Although it often is an uphill fight, ERIM researchers from RSM have become more and more successful in securing funding from NWO.

After a time of freedom from administrative duties, in 2007 the Executive Board of the University asked me to become Dean of RSM again, for an interim period. Han van Dissel, Dean since 2002, had been appointed Director General of CEDEP (Fontainebleau, France) and there was no successor yet. It was an interesting experience to see how much the School had changed since my previous Deanship in 1989. It was not only much larger, but also much more professional, not only in teaching and research, but also in areas such as student recruitment, student placement, career planning support, media, public relations, and

¹¹ Nederlandse organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek

¹² Maatschappij en Gedragwetenschappen

business and alumni contacts. In 2008, George Yip came over from the London Business School to become Dean of RSM.

In 2008, it was forty years since my entry in the academic world as an assistant professor at the marketing department of Wageningen University. To celebrate this, on April 22 there was a reception with colleagues, family, and friends. In 2010, I officially retired. On June 15, I gave my valedictory address in the Auditorium of the Erasmus University, with many colleagues present from the Erasmus University, from other universities in the Netherlands, and from abroad, especially many friends from my EMAC and Marketing Science networks. It was a colorful cortege of professors in their university gowns from all over the world, followed by a marvelous party at the Rotterdam Cruise Terminal. I received several homages: title of RSM Professor Honoris Emeritus from the School, the Honorary Fellow Award from ERIM, the Ad Fontes Medal from the Erasmus University, and I was appointed as Officer in the Order of Oranje-Nassau by Her Majesty the Queen. Earlier that year, I had received the (inaugural) Distinguished Marketing Scholar Award from EMAC.

For an academic researcher, interest in one's field of study does not stop with the formal university appointment. I appreciate the hospitality agreement from the Marketing Department since my official retirement. I enjoy being there for one or two days a week, and working in the dynamic environment of my marketing colleagues. During the period 2011-2015, I also had a part-time appointment as visiting research professor at the Bocconi University in Milan, where I went to work with marketing colleagues twice a year. At RSM, I participate in research seminars, work on research projects and papers, and do reviewing and editing work, including editing special issues of journals. Together with our former department colleague Ralf van der Lans (now in Hong Kong), I edited *The Handbook of Marketing Decision Models* (Second Edition; Springer). As regards the School, Dean Steef van de Velde has occasionally asked me to help with organizational/HRM issues. Furthermore, I chair PhD graduation sessions of RSM candidates, which keeps me up to date about the research in the various domains of the School.

REFLECTION

Having started with 30 students in 1970, RSM now has 9000 students (BSc, MSc, and MBA/Exec). There are RSM 40,000 alumni active all over the world. Of the schools of Erasmus University, RSM has the

largest number of students, and its alumni are earning the highest salaries¹³. In terms of research, RSM is consistently in Europe's top tier of research facilities, and its PhDs are placed at prominent universities all over the globe. Nobody can deny that RSM is a success. This success is the result of a clear vision, unambiguous quality goals, persistence, dedicated faculty members, supporting staff, and administrators, an ambitious student population, but also of a fighting spirit in case of resistance, and resilience at setbacks during the fifty years of its existence.

The question is how to remain successful in the future. I have four recommendations

1. RSM should remain a trailblazer. Although RSM is one of the youngest schools of the Erasmus University, it has been a trailblazer in several respects. As the first school, it introduced Information Technology as an integrating element in its curriculum. As early as 1984, all entering students of the new pre-experience program in management received their own personal computer. RSM was also ahead in the development of its IT infrastructure. Furthermore, RSM was early with internationalization. It started a large Bachelor Program in International Business Administration, fully in English twenty years ago. Moreover, it has an impressive set of student exchange programs with a large network of other global business schools. Through its strong research reputation, RSM is attractive for foreign scholars. Probably, it is the school with the most internationalized faculty of the EUR, and for the second time now, it has a non-Dutch Dean. A third area where RSM is leading the pack is alumni relations. It was the first school with a professional alumni office, up-to-date databases of its various alumni groups, strong interactions with alumni, and it has the most active alumni associations. A business school is probably the most outward-looking school on a university campus, and it is only natural that RSM has taken the lead on these issues. By all measures, RSM is also the number one business school in the Netherlands. RSM should remain a trailblazer, not only at the EUR, but also in the wider context of the Netherlands business school environment.
2. RSM should remain independent and entrepreneurial. From the start, RSM has been entrepreneurial, a bit provocative perhaps, with a can-do mentality. These qualities flourished in the open culture in Delft and have been retained in the DNA of the School until today. RSM now finds itself within the setting of the Erasmus University. Being part of a powerful university brings many advantages, but there is a danger of the University, with a policy of "one size fits

¹³ WO Monitor 2014

all”, treating each school in the same way. A business school, problem oriented, interdisciplinary, and with strong ties to society at large is a unique phenomenon that needs room to maneuver to be successful. Driven by its entrepreneurial instincts, RSM should claim the room that it needs to remain successful, and, in its own interest, the University should have the wisdom to provide this room. A successful RSM makes the Erasmus University more successful.

3. RSM should foster its relations with the close business environment. “All business is local”, is a famous expression in the management literature. Because of its emphasis on top research, its internalization and its globalizing faculty, RSM runs the risk of losing contact with the local business environment. The start of RSM (actually its predecessor Interfaculteit Bedrijfskunde) was stimulated by donations of prominent companies in the Netherlands. Traditionally there was much interaction between the School and the Dutch business world through student internships, consultancy projects, seats on company boards, alumni, and the presence of RSM faculty in Dutch professional associations, such as for marketing, finance, and logistics. Academic journals in Dutch, as a means for local visibility have practically disappeared. With the ERIM rules, there is little room for applied research projects, like before. For example, from marketing, I remember projects in the FMCG industry, in banking, in the pharmaceutical industry, the agribusiness, the veterinary industry, CRM, and government departments. Such projects generate few publications in top journals but are important to keep in touch with business practice, the ultimate reality test for our managerial insights. Of course, the Dutch business world is globalizing too, but apart from the multinationals, at a much lower rate than RSM. At a time where the limits of globalization are becoming visible, RSM should nourish and strengthen its relations within the Netherlands’ and in the EU business community.
4. RSM should keep an eye on the big picture. High quality research is mostly extremely specialized. There is a tendency of studying increasingly detailed problems with ever more sophisticated methods. This also applies to much of the work in RSM, and it is a necessary condition for publishing in top journals. This creates the danger that research groups and departments become inward-looking silos with little mutual interaction. It is important that we preserve room for attention to big picture business issues. This is in line with the original spirit of our School, where a problem area was taken as the starting point, followed by multidisciplinary ways of approaching it. To foster integration, researchers from all over RSM could choose a broad common theme, for example global supply chains, the datafication of business decisions, business responsibility or some other theme, explore this from the perspectives of different RSM

expertise groups, and come up with new, synergetic insights. This type of work can also help strengthen our presence in the business community and in the wider society.

There are other ways to take a step back from deep specialization and to reflect on business problems and how we approach them. For example, through delving into the philosophy of science of research in management. Colleagues from the Erasmus School of Philosophy might be interested in joining. From time to time, it is important to look at what we are doing from a distance.

The development of RSM does not stop here. With its new Dean, Ansgar Richter, again a person coming from outside with a fresh look, I hope the School will march towards new vistas.

When I considered joining the Interfaculteit Bedrijfskunde in the early 1980s, people warned me that it was a hectic place with unconventional approaches. Perhaps it would be better to stay in economics, where things are well-structured and predictable. However, I have never regretted this step. On the contrary, in the School, I was as happy as a fish in water right from the start. I have always liked its dynamics and the interdisciplinary approach to business phenomena and problems. As Dean and as Scientific Director of ERIM, I have addressed many incoming classes of PhD students. My message was that business phenomena are the most interesting, but also the most complex phenomena to study. Therefore, business schools need the best scientific minds. Organizations such as KNAW and NWO still need to learn this lesson.

Berend Wierenga

Rotterdam,
Revised September 2020

Appendix

Bedrijfskunde song for the celebration of becoming an official “Faculteit”, October 30, 1987

“ Over en op de (inter)faculteit”

Refrein

We zien het wel, we zien het wel,
we zullen het wel beleven.
Maar kan het niet een beetje snel,
want het leven duurt maar even

t Was in de jaren zeventig, wat gaat de tijd toch snel.
Bedrijfskunde bestond nog niet, d'andere studies wel.
Hoe werd je koopman of firmant als monodisciplant?
Je had -wat ook je studie was -van zaken geen verstand.
De grote banen met veel geld, ze lagen in 't verschiep.
Bedrijfskunde studeren? Neen! In Ne'erland kon dat niet.. ..

Postkandidaats of integraal, dat werd de hete vraag;
en ieder die een uitspraak deed, kreeg prompt de volle laag.
Ze ruzieden er ferm op los, het hooggeleerde stel.
Het leek wel een methodenstrijd, zo furieus en fel.
Met Langman als een stimulans, die best van wanten wist;
Zijn woordenstroom was eindeloos, dus 't pleit werd toch beslist

De kogel was toen door de kerk, het echte werk begon.
Het bouwen van een faculteit, zo snel als dat maar kon.
De hooggeleerden uitgezocht, de staf gerecruteerd,
het studieplan werd opgezet en fel bediscussieerd.
Studenten kwamen toegesneld en werden assistent;
hun einddoel was heel expliciet: in twee jaar president.. ..

Met een verhouding een op 8, van staffid tot student
was 't heerlijk werken, ja 't is waar, we zijn er door verwend.
Van Rotterdam naar Delft verhuisd, ver van de moederschoot,
beseften wij pas achteraf de vrijheid die 't ons bood!
Een eigen huis, een ruime staf en geld meer dan genoeg,
een afzetmarkt die al maar door om onze mensen vroeg

Probleemgebieden een tot vier met veel geïntegreer;
een businessplan, een krachtenveld, een consistentieeler.
Modellen en O.R.-techniek, je simuleert je rot;
evaluaties steeds maar weer als 't welbekende slot.
Doch ondanks duister taalgebruik, we zijn als kool gegroeid;
maar 't geld is op, de staf te klein, de helden zijn vermoeid ...

Zo'n snelle groei, dat is funest, dat wordt ons nog fataal.
De onderlinge strijd ebt weg, het onderzoek wordt schraal.
Het adviseurschap Ionkt zo lief, een bijbaan lacht je toe;
met passen, meten, kan het net; nou ja, maar vraag niet hoe.
We zijn dan ook de faculteit, die Ne'erland adviseert
en onder 't mom "je blijft zo bij" veel gelden genereert

De hooggeleerden warden oud, ze trekken zich terug.
Hun plaatsen dienen opgevuld en als het kan, liefst vlug.

Waar is het jeugdige talent, dat in hun voetspoor treedt;
en eensgezind, bezielde en trouw, ook nog van wanten weet.
Hoe vullen we de gaten op met mensen van gezag,
die hoog gemotiveerd zijn en met kracht in hun gedrag

Toen werd het eens plotsklaps Rotterdam, terug in moeders' schoot
Van vrijheid naar gebondenheid, de tegenzin was groot.
d'Ontvangst was koel, de spanning hoog, er stond zoveel op 't spel;
Wij waren voor de EUR-cultuur een hoogst wanord'lijk stel
We zijn verarmd, gekooïd, belaagd, maar geven het niet op,
want als de groei nog even blijft, dan liggen wij op kop

Die faculteit, die faculteit, ze is nu toch erkend!
Het is gewoon een hele eer, als je er lid van bent.
Wij zijn de grenzen van ons land heel duid'lijk gepasseerd
en worden internationaal beslist gerespecteerd.
Zelfs met verhouding dertig-één zijn wij niet te verslaan
en durven wij als faculteit bewust de toekomst aan