

Summary masterpaper

Healthcare Innovation

The Rotterdam approach in strategic international alliances



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TIAS Business School, January 2015

Summary

Introduction

Innovation in Rotterdam follows a pragmatic approach of cooperating and risk taking. Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences integrated this approach in the Rotterdam Educational Model: students, teachers and researchers cooperate with partners from the work field during real life projects.

According to the Dutch Ministry working in the Triple Helix offers a unique selling point for higher education institutes within and outside the European context. Rotterdam University has a total amount of 34.000 students in different sectors; around 3000 at the School of Health Care Studies that closely cooperates with the Research Centre Healthcare Innovations and the Expertise Centre Social Innovation. Our School of Healthcare Studies and Research Centre Healthcare Innovation reorient themselves *on* their role in creating public value in a global perspective.

This paper is about strategic positioning in an international context for higher education and applied science in the healthcare sector. Innovating in international networks is relatively new and demands complex networking skills. Several perspectives of this management issue are highlighted in this paper. The goal is to detect whether it is possible to add public value by introducing the Rotterdam approach into international innovation and valorisation networks.

Positioning Rotterdam University as a regional knowledge centre

To decide about positioning higher education institutes in innovation networks it is necessary to detect mission, legitimation and organizational capacity among Rotterdam University and partners in healthcare and businesses. Mission and legitimacy of higher education become clear in national and European policy statements about strengthening the important role of higher education institutes as knowledge institutes besides providing excellent education. Higher Education Institutes are asked to help decreasing the gap between knowledge and innovation, known as the knowledge paradox, by including applied sciences within all bachelor programmes. International orientation and cultural awareness are important competences for higher educated personnel.

Rotterdam University includes five Research Centres and two Centres of Expertise which are closely related to all educational faculties. According to the Rotterdam Educational Model all students have to participate in applied science. Excellent students are being challenged to participate in the Honours Program. They help solving wicked problems that need creative, multidisciplinary and sometimes international approaches. Within our School of Healthcare Studies and Research Centre Healthcare Innovations we have an active and enthusiastic Honours Programme team of teachers, researchers and a growing amount of students.

Global development in Higher Education and Healthcare sector

The World Health Organization states that ageing and health inequalities are important worldwide trends that need attention: how can we subdue medical costs

within an ageing population with an increasing amount of chronic diseases? One of the strategic summits for the EU is to improve smart economic growth through efficient investments in education, research and innovation. Important governance instruments to achieve these goals are programmes like Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+. Innovation departments of healthcare institutes tend to exchanging knowledge with foreign institutes, sometimes co-creating with businesses and/or universities. Although University Hospitals are already used to cooperate in international project groups for research and development for many healthcare institutes this is quite new. Also many students and teachers are lacking commitment or capabilities for international education.

Governance perspective

Strategic decision making within a university is complicated, because both the organization and the environment are complex: internal and external stakeholders have opposite interests and organization leaders do have governmental restrictions. Higher education institutes need a broad vision on their international public value and on internationalisation in bachelor programmes. Commitment of professionals is very important in both healthcare- and higher education institutes because they have a significant role in determining content and quality of educational programmes. That's why their contribution is needed in determining mission, vision and organizational structure. Open innovation in an international context demands complex forms of innovation management. Both people and organizations can never make rational decisions and that's why they tend to choose 'good-enough' strategies. Choosing to be a partner in international networks for co-creation in healthcare innovation is much more stubborn than 'good-enough'. An ideal strategy has not been found yet and the results are uncertain. You can't expect complete commitment for these types of strategies. Still, in the future this might probably turn out to be the right strategy, because the strong pressure to change in an uncertain environment demands flexibility. To innovate healthcare in organizational network constructions leaders need to think out of the box in organizational structures: released of rules and procedures. Allow the project team to run the projects beside the standing organization and accept uncertainty as part of the innovation process. Good governance is to give full commitment to the project team and at the same time don't ask commitment from the rest of the organization. The advice is to experiment in Living Labs and work on several innovative projects at the same time. The strategic approach is to stop unsuccessful activities and further implement successful ones. Innovation teams like our honours programme teams seem to fit in this approach.

Conclusion / discussion

Based on this analysis you could state that Rotterdam University has the organizational capacity and is legitimated by its environment to participate in

European partnerships in order to create new public value. Of course the success of co-operation in the triple helix also depends on the strategic choices and organizational capacity of healthcare institutions and businesses involved. Their strategic weighing will be influenced by public and financial value. Especially partners from the profit sector will have to decide whether or not to participate in open innovation networks as a new competitive strategy. The Rotterdam approach is well known among regional partners in both profit and non-profit sectors and could be useful for knowledge building in international strategic partnerships. Let's prepare ourselves!