

Evaluation of the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI)

Reaction of the Board and Management of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences

For the board and management of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) it is a pleasure to respond to the Research Evaluation Report of the International Peer Review Committee that visited the NIDI in January 2008. We would like to thank the members of the committee for their time, energy and enthusiasm in conducting this valuable evaluation. It is without doubt that the results of peer reviews play an important role in the policy of the Academy towards the involved institutes.

The board and management welcome the fact that the institute as a whole is judged as *very good to excellent*, whereby all relevant subtopics as indicated by the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) have been evaluated with the score *very good*.

This shows the effectiveness of the new direction that was selected by the NIDI management after the evaluation in 2001. In that evaluation NIDI was advised to strengthen its analytical research and to increase the scientific output. This clearly has taken place, and the KNAW highly appreciates the work that has been performed by the NIDI management to reach this successful new stage in the scientific development of the NIDI. This development took place in a period, characterized by relevant problems in terms of budget and organization. The fact that the changes in scientific scope and organizational structure took place without disturbing the social cohesion within the institute is a remarkable achievement.

The KNAW agrees with the review committee that this is not the end of the road. There is still ample room for improvement concerning the level of peer reviewed publications.

The scientific staff is still not totally fit for NIDI's scientific ambitions. A small group of researchers is burdened with too many tasks, whereby midlevel staff *in toto* does not contribute to the output as much as would be necessary given the goals that have been set. The construction of so-called writing teams is welcomed but care should be taken that these teams do not have too many "free riders" on board.

Furthermore, the NIDI management should continue to analyze and communicate in clear terms what type of faculty they need in order to reach the scientific goals (fundamental as well as applied) in the near future.

The KNAW welcomes the recent start of a shift from a majority of tenured positions to a majority of non-tenured positions, so that the institute becomes more flexible in designing its scientific future. It is recognized that this is a process that will take some years to complete. The KNAW admits that always a tension exists between the ambition to construct a dynamic organization and the perspectives one would like to offer to very promising young scientists.

Nevertheless the policy to create a more dynamic human resources management resulting in a *culture of mobility* is welcomed by the Academy and will be stimulated. The board and management of the Royal Academy thinks that important progress has been made with changing the attitude towards job mobility. The NIDI management is encouraged to follow this managerial path further.

The same is true for the ambition to internationalize the institute. The inflow of international scientists may form a relevant first impetus. The invitational climate that has been created for PhD students may play an additional role in increasing the attractiveness of NIDI for foreign PhD-students. This ambition is fully supported by the KNAW.

The KNAW agrees with the committee's concern about the representativeness of survey data but at the same time the KNAW board is reassured by the fact that the NIDI management is well aware of this vulnerable aspect of data collection and that it seeks a solution of this problem.

The KNAW agrees with the committee regarding NIDI's turn to global health research. However the KNAW argues that it is necessary for the NIDI to show how this development will take place. Indeed,

to fulfill the ambition for global health research the NIDI has to enter a scientific domain with many competing disciplines (e.g. medicine, epidemiology).

The KNAW agrees with the NIDI management when it states that NIDI should not play a consultancy role with respect to the use of register data. Hence, the Academy will not follow the committee's recommendation.

Although it is always possible to improve the public relation efforts, the KNAW would like to praise the NIDI for their past performance and actual efforts at this point. In particular Demos, the free journal plays a relevant role in public science education.

The KNAW does not agree with the committee that the NIDI, in order to hire top-level scientists, is hampered by the existing salary system. The KNAW and by this the NIDI follows the same collective labour agreement as all universities in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the NIDI management has, more or less, full freedom to pay an additional bonus to the salary in relation to scarcity of the scientific talent market.

The KNAW agrees with the suggestion of the committee to work on an academy-wide solution of access to on-line scientific journals.

The arguments regarding the present housing of the NIDI are well taken and will play a role in the decision making process concerning the most adequate (future) housing of the institute.

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