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A school for future captains of industry

**Abstract :**

“We are about to confer, gentlemen, a great and lasting benefit tot he country. We are about to install forces and institutions that will advance the practical, creative faculties of the core of the people.” These are the words the leader of the Dutch liberals, J.R. Thorbecke, spoke in the first chamber of the parliament at the closing of the debate concerning his new educational law, 1st of may 1863. The minister hardly exaggerated. The Dutch education in mathematics and physics profoundly profited by the law on secondary eduction. One of the schools the law instituted was the so called “hogere burgerschool,” (hbs) the higher civilian school. It was an institution for he upper middle class, citizens who were not predestined for a scientific future, but were aspiring after a leading position in trade and manufacture. These future captains of industry needed knowledge of and insight in the principles of mathematics and physics. The new school emphasised the exact sciences, they constituted about a third of the all lessons in the five years course. Thereby the new hbs was an ultra modern training. The hbs emancipated the upper middle class as well as the exact sciences. Before the law on secondary education and the institution of the hbs social prestige had been allmostr exclusively linked tot he classical education, eventually augmented with the study of languages and history. Mathematics and physics were deemed less civilising. But with the inauguration of the hbs those subject gained there own statusin the core of a prestigious new training for executive personnel in trade and manufacture. All over the counrty, in cities and villages, new schools of the hbs-type were erected in the sixties and seventies of the nineteenth century. Civilised elites in those population centres (those elites happened allso to be the constituency) were influenced by a new educational philosophy. The teachers of the new school, more often then not very high trained newcomers in the city or village, came to dominate the cultural life in the community. And young talented students gained a spot where their talent could develop. It is a remarcable fact that at the end of the nineteenth century the Netherlands brought forth Nbelprice winners for physics and one for chemistry. I seems very probable that the hbs was a generator for this stunning Dutch scientific revolution. Very limited bibliography Bartels, A., Een eeuw middelbaar onderwijs. 1863 – 1963. Groningen,1963. Cohen, Floris, De herschepping van de wereld. Het ontstaan van de moderne natuurwetenschap verklaard. Amsterdam, 2008 Dasberg, Dr. L en drs. J.W.G. Jansing, Meer kennis meer macht. Het Nederlands onderwijs 1843-1914 Haarlem, 1978 Knippenberg, Hans & Ben de Pater, De eenwording van Nederland. Schaalvergroting en integratie sinds 1800. SUN, Nijmegen, 1988 Kreenen, dr. J.J., Wet van den 2 Mei 1863 (Stbl. no 50) op het Middelbaar Onderwijs. Met de daarover vooral in de tweede kamer der Staten Generaal gewisselde stukken en gehouden beraadslagingen. Schiedam (H.A.M. Roelands),1864 Mandemakers, Cornelis Albert, HBS en gymnasium : ontwikkeling, structuur, sociale achtergrond en schoolprestaties, Nederland, circa 1800-1968. Amsterdam, Stichting beheer IISG, 1996 Steyn Parvé, Dr. D.J., De

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