

The Life of Hermine Weijland

Hermine was born in the village of Bedum (near Groningen) on 30 November 1932, the fourth child and first daughter of a family that would eventually include six children. Both her parents worked in teaching. Intelligent and ambitious, Hermine made great strides at primary school and later at secondary school. Hermine wished to continue her studies, but the late 1940s was a period of financial constraints for many, and there were no student grants in those days. When she finished school, Hermine had to help her mother at home, looking after the house. This was a bitter pill to swallow for Hermine. Fortunately, after a year, she was able to go live in Apeldoorn with her aunt who was also a teacher, where she had the chance to attend preparatory college. After completing her schooling, she started to teach at a school in Kampen at the age of 19. She then taught at various schools around the country for a number of years.

Meanwhile, the financial situation in the Netherlands began to improve. Parents were entitled to a tax deduction for each child in college, as well as triple family allowances. This amounted more than half of a student budget. So in 1961, Hermine started to study economics at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, along with her sister, who went to medical school. She was the only female student in the faculty, except for one older student, but that was not a problem for her. Professor Tinbergen was a great role model for her and she threw herself into her work. Initially she continued to teach one day a week at a school in Amsterdam, but she did so well during her first year that she was awarded a full scholarship. She continued to excel and the funding was extended for her remaining years of study. With the financial aid she still received from her parents, she managed to complete her degree within five years.

Hermine graduated when she was 33 years old, and then went to work at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. This involved teaching at a much higher level and working with students from abroad. Many of them went on to gain international fame. It was also where she met her partner. Together they embarked on a PhD, but unfortunately the relationship came to an end after ten years. Hermine continued her research alone.

In the late 1970s, she became a lecturer at the Faculty of Economics at VU Amsterdam. She wrote her dissertation on 'Distributive Forces in Economic Development Forces' in 1982. She also worked for the Ministry of Development Cooperation during her holidays. At the request of the Ministry, the faculty sent her to the University of Salatiga in Indonesia to give guest lectures. She was also asked to advise on and monitor various small-scale projects in Sumatra, Pakistan and South Korea. These projects meant a win-win situation for Hermine and the faculty: the funding from the ministry went to the faculty and the Ministry also paid for additional researchers. In this way Hermine could keep her research staff as well as gain a great deal of valuable experience.

Hermine was active on many levels: her family, the university, the provision of development aid and the Church in Uitgeest and Akersloot. As a deeply religious and modern woman, she felt quite at home with all of these. Hermine was a strong, energetic, courageous and optimistic woman - someone whose natural disposition was to love others. Her pupils, students, colleagues and close friends always had a special place in her heart. She was also very popular among her students and played a major role in the faculty's development economics section.

In retirement, she was able to indulge her artistic inclinations to the full. She took up painting, handicrafts and gardening again. But she always stayed in touch with the Faculty of Economics and occasionally took on projects for them. She continued publishing articles in international journals until 1999. The last year of her life was tough. She became seriously ill and passed away on 1 July 2001.