



SCIENTIFIC FINAL REPORT

Two- and three-year projects and postdoctoral projects

Registration number, Östersjöstiftelsen: 11/18

Project manager: Johanna Ringarp

Project title: "Meritocracy, democracy or market? Governance of higher education in Finland and Sweden, 1965-2018."

1. The three most important results of the project and what conclusions can be drawn from them

1. The prevalence of semi-public organisations in Finland, such as associations under public law, facilitated the implementation of a reform that made universities independent legal subjects in 2009. Similar reforms were proposed in Sweden, but was abandoned since they seemed impossible due to a lack of familiarity with similar organizations. From this, we can conclude that the national political culture and governance model are of importance in explaining how international governance trends are received and implemented in different national settings.

2. Although reformers in Sweden and Finland have had similar intentions, the constitutionally guaranteed autonomy of higher education in Finland have had a tangible influence in the formulation of new legislation. For example, the Constitutional Committee of the Finnish parliament has deemed external majority in university boards incompatible with university autonomy. In Sweden, higher education lacks similar protection, and the university boards now have a majority of external members.

3. Although there are differences in the development of the governance of Swedish and Finnish higher education, they are still moving in the same direction, and search for similar solutions to similar problems. The differences related constitution and political culture affects the pace and extent of the change, but not the direction. For example, although only Sweden has accepted an external majority in university boards, the share of external members have increased also in Finland.

2. The project's contribution to the international research frontline

Very few systematic comparative studies of the governance of higher education have been conducted. We have consciously used MSSD (Most Similar System Design) in a comparison of Sweden and Finland, two neighbouring countries with similar governance traditions. Thereby keeping most variables equal, we have been able to isolate the important factors of political culture that have had the greatest modulating influence on the international trends in governance of higher education.

3. The contribution of the research to the knowledge of the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe

The project members arranged a workshop at Hanholmen, where researchers from the Nordic countries and Poland gathered. The contributions, some of which were published in a special issue of NordSTEP, discussed the positions Higher education in the Nordic countries both in terms of a Nordic Model (Karran) and as examples of semiperipheral states (Musial).

Holmén's (2021) article on Åland university of applied science highlighted the particular challenges associated governance of higher education on a small autonomous island in the Baltic sea.



4. New research questions that the project has led to

From this project new research questions have emerged that had led to new project application. Both Johanna Ringarp and Janne Holmén has initiated new projects which are financed by the research program “Demokrati och högre utbildning” at Uppsala University.

The starting point for Johanna Ringarps project “What do we want from universities? An analysis of the Social Democrats' higher education policy 1990-2014” is that the view of what higher education is has consequences for the possibilities of universities and colleges to be democratic and culture-bearing institutions. Overall research questions are: What has been the Social Democrats' goal for higher education? What significance have the party's basic ideas about the compensatory mission had for their view of higher education studies? How was their overall focus on broadening recruitment and regionalization reflected in their higher education policy?

The aims of Janne Holmén's project “Toppuniversitetens finansiering och styrformer” is to investigate how models of funding and forms of governance interplay in shaping the conditions for academic freedom and resource allocation at established research universities. The extent to which academic freedom is interpreted as including faculty influence over resource allocation is also central to this question. Forms of governance here refers to the ”ultimate sovereigns”, who wields the power to appoint the university board, for example alumni, the collegium, or the government. The main hypothesis of the project is that the more resources an institution has, the larger share of the resources are allocated to other causes than teaching and research. However, this tendency can be counteracted through a governance system with substantial faculty influence.

Johanna Ringarp has also initiated a new project “Frigör universiteten“, that so far is unfunded but for which she is seeking funds for. The project analyses the development of higher education policy ideas at the intersection of political parties, business organizations and think tanks. The focus is on the emergence and establishment of the idea of foundation universities in Sweden and examines the period 1965-2015.

5. Dissemination of the results of the project within and outside the research community

Monograph:

Ringarp, Johanna, *Frihetsretorik och marknadslogik. En analys av den svenska högskoledebatten, 1965-2014*, Makadam förlag (kommande).

Articles:

Holmén, Janne & Ringarp, Johanna, Reforms of higher education and research in the Nordic countries: global trends and Nordic models in Academia, *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, NordSTEP 2022, peer reviewed,

<https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2023.2185367>

Holmén, Janne & Ringarp, Johanna, Public, private, or in between? Institutional isomorphism and the legal entities in Swedish and Finnish higher education, *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, NordSTEP 2022, peer reviewed,

<https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2022.2155348>



Holmén, Janne. “The autonomy of higher education in Finland and Sweden: global management trends meet national political culture and governance models”, *Comparative Education* 58(2), 2022, 147-163, *peer reviewed*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2021.2018826>

Holmén, Janne, ”Åländsk högre utbildning: Styrning och autonomi” in Spiliopoulou Åkermark, Sia (ed.), *Styr åläningarna sitt öde?: Demokratiperspektiv på Åland*, Mariehamn: Ålands fredsinstitut/Cavannus, 2021. https://peace.ax/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/DemokratiAland_ss1-9Innehallsfor-teckning.pdf

Holmén, Janne & Ringarp, Johanna, “Becoming universities? Academisation and the integration of Finnish and Swedish teacher education institutions in the system of higher education”, in Eckhardt Larsen, Jesper, Schulte, Barbara & Thue Fredrik W (eds.), *Schoolteachers and the Nordic Model. Comparative and historical perspectives*, Routledge, Oxford Studies in Comparative Education, 2022, 113-126. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003082514>

Holmén, Janne & Ringarp, Johanna, 1968 och reformer av högre utbildning i Finland och Sverige, i Burman, Anders & Landahl, Joakim (red.), *1968 och pedagogiken*, Södertörn Studies in Intellectual and Cultural History 4, Södertörns högskola, Huddinge, 2020, s. 49-69. (Samförfattad). <https://sh.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1449391/FULLTEXT02.pdf>

Popular science publications, etc.:

Holmén, Janne & Ringarp; Johanna: ”Finsk-svenskt samarbete i lärarutbildningen”, seminarium, Arrangör: Hanaholmen kulturfonden för Sverige och Finland, Almedalen, July 5, 2022.

Conferences: (the five most important organized and papers presented).

In December 2021, the project members organised the workshop “Reforms and governance of Nordic higher education” at Hanasaari, Helsinki. The results have been published in a special issue of the *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/znst20/9/1>

Holmén, Janne & Ringarp, Johanna, “International trends, political cultures and university autonomy in Sweden and Finland”, presentation at the 4th annual Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education Conference ‘Universiteis under siege?’, June 7-9, 2022.

Holmén, Janne & Ringarp, Johanna, ”What is a University? Types of legal entities in Swedish and Finnish Higher Education”, presentation at the Fifth Nordic Challenges Conference, ‘Nordic Neighbourhoods: Affinity and Distinction in the Baltic Sea Region and Beyond’, Renew, Södertörns högskola, June 1-3, 2022.

Holmén, Janne & Ringarp, Johanna, “The Academization of Teacher Education and the Making of the Systems of Higher Education. Sweden and Finland, in *Schoolteachers and the Nordic Model – Comparative and Historical Perspectives Part 1*, ICHE 42, Örebro universitet, June 16, 2021.



Holmén, Janne & Ringarp, Johanna, "Political Cultures and University autonomy: Differences and similarities in the higher education system in Finland and Sweden" på konferensen "Forskning om högre utbildning", Örebro universitet, May 19, 2021.