



Utvalget for
høyere utdanning

Steering Autonomous Universities Experiences from the Nordic Region: Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden

Peter Maassen

Tagung des Österreichischen Wissenschaftsrates
“Steering Autonomous Universities: European Perspectives”
Vienna, 27 & 28 November 2009



Nordic Region

- 1. Small Region: 25 million inhabitants**
- 2. Integrated Region: politically, economically (incl, labour market), socially, culturally/scientifically (incl. HE & Research)**
- 3. Successful Region:**
 - a) Combined GDP: 6-8th in the world**
 - b) Leading major global rankings/indexes: Innovation; Globalisation; Social inclusion; Living conditions; Environmental sustainability, etc.**
 - c) Effective HE & Research systems: Participation rates; Research output, Research impact; Rankings; FP7/ERC, NSF/NIH**



Nordic HEIs and their Performance

HEIs:

7 (No) + 8 (DK) + 20 (Fi) + 16 (Swe) = 51 universities

8 (DK) + 5 (Swe) + 28 (Swe) + 31 (Fi) + 23 (No) + 8 (No) = 102 colleges

“Shanghai ranking”:

7 Nordic universities in top 100; (24 in top 500)

European Research Council (ERC), first three rounds:

Nordic researchers: 73 Grants (= 9%)

FP7 Cooperation:

At least 1 Nordic partner in 47% of all selected projects

Research Production/Impact:

all Nordic countries among most productive and highest impact countries



Higher Education Reforms & Governance models:

A. Role of legal framework / 4 basic variations

Countries where:

- Everything is allowed, even if it is forbidden
- Everything is allowed, unless it is forbidden
- Everything is forbidden, unless it is allowed
- Everything is allowed, unless it is forbidden

B. Minister – university relationship:

- Minister ‘on top of the universities’: Denmark
- Minister at a distance: Sweden (*Hogskoleverket*)
- ‘Intense’ Ministry – university relationship; limited direct role for Minister
 - contract / negotiation based (Finland)
 - goal / indicator based (Norway)



Essence of Recent HE reforms; White Papers; Commissions

Denmark:

Two Ministries responsible for HE:

Ministry of Science, Technology & Innovation (responsible for universities);

Ministry of Education (responsible for colleges)

2003: Strengthening University Autonomy (new Law)

- Adaptation of legal status
- Executive university governance structure

2007: University mergers ("voluntary"; incentives related to Globalisation strategy)

- Improving research performance of universities
- Integrating public sector research institutes into universities

Strict separation of university and college sectors (binary system)



Essence of Recent HE reforms; White Papers; Commissions

Finland:

2009/2010: University Reform (new Law)

- Extend university autonomy (Decoupling of university budget from state budget)
- From earmarked strategic budget items to strategic lump sums
- Adaptation of legal status (foundation or public corporation)
- University governance structure changed
- University employed by universities (no longer civil servants)

Major reform of polytechnic sector announced, but continued binary structure

Voluntary, incentive driven mergers



Essence of Recent HE reforms; White Papers; Commissions

Norway:

2003: Quality Reform (new Law)

- Educational reform (Bologna implementation)
- Change in university governance structure
- Introduction of performance elements in state HE budget (40%)
- Opening up of HE structure: høyskoler allowed to offer PhD & Master programmes; høyskoler can apply for university status

2003: Ryssdal Commission (Green paper on legal status of universities)

- Proposal rejected, universities still part of state structure

2008: Stjernø Commission (Green paper on future development of Norwegian HE)

- Overall reform proposal rejected
- Most 'Repair' proposals accepted and implemented separately

Voluntary mergers; 'fading away' of binary structure

Concerns about institutional autonomy: national working group



Essence of Recent HE reforms; White Papers; Commissions

Sweden

2008: Green Paper on university funding

- Proposed separation of education and research funding
- Proposed concentration of research funding in few top universities

(Still under discussion)

2008: Green Paper on university status

- Proposed change of legal status of HEIs into public corporations
- System diversity through institutional profiles
- Strengthening of institutional leadership and management
- Institutional staff no longer civil servants
- University Board with external majority
- Institutions responsible for quality control

(Still under discussion)

Voluntary mergers



National Higher Education Planning

Why national planning of Higher Education?

Clark (1983):

- **Forces that keep HE systems together**
- **Forces that pull HE systems in different directions (diversity)**

Olsen (2007)

”Europe in Search of New Political Order”

- **System level need for order**
- **Need for institutional autonomy (diversity/disorder)**



How to create/maintain balance between order and disorder?

Creating order in European HE systems traditionally national issue, i.e. national systems and adaptations of university autonomy

Emergence of:

European Higher Education Area / European Research Area

Creating balance no longer solely a national issue; there is also a need to create a balance between a European order in HE and European university autonomy ('European Carnegie classification')



National planning of HE in the Nordic countries

Who bears responsibility for planning HE system development?

- **Government/Sector Minister**
- **Ministry bureaucracy**
- **Parliament**
- **Representative buffer agency**
- **Independent Advisory Council**



National planning of HE in the Nordic countries

Denmark:

- **Minister of Science** (Government)
- Ministry of Science
- **Parliament**
- **Universities Denmark**
- Individual universities (Development contract negotiations)

Finland:

- **Ministry of Education**
- Parliament
- Finnish Council of University Rectors
- Rectors' conference of Finnish Polytechnics
- **Individual universities** (Contract negotiations)



National planning of HE in the Nordic countries (cont.)

Norway:

- **Ministry of Education**
- Minister of Higher Education and Science (Government)
- **Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR)**
- Individual universities (Goal/indicator development and achievement reporting)

Sweden:

- Ministry of Education
- **Swedish National agency for Higher Education (Högskoleverket)**
- Association of Swedish Higher Education (SUHF)
- **Individual universities** (Contract negotiations)



Targets for universities

Education: development/adaptation of new & closure of existing study programmes

Research: research priority areas

Denmark:

Education: apriori accreditation of new study programmes (**limiting** autonomy)

Research: concentration of public research funds in universities; earmarked budget component for research (**high** level of institutional autonomy)

Finland:

Education: institutional autonomy in development and closure of study programmes (autonomy **high**)

Research: from targeted area funding to lump sum strategic funding (**increasing** autonomy)

Centres of excellence determined by Academy of Science and Ministry of Education (**limiting** autonomy)

Norway:

Education: institutional autonomy in development and closure of study programmes (autonomy **high**)

Research: centres of excellence funded/determined by Research Council (**limited** institutional autonomy)

Sweden:

Education: institutional autonomy in development and closure of study programmes (autonomy **high**)

Research: Powerful Research Council; no national system for centres of excellence; high level of public research funding (**moderate** institutional autonomy)



Conclusions

1. Nordic region: integrated in many ways, but diverse university (and college) autonomy approach and practice.
2. Overall picture:
 - University autonomy higher than college autonomy
 - Institutional autonomy wrt education high (Denmark exception)
 - Institutional autonomy wrt research varies (DK high to NO limited)
3. National HE planning through contract negotiations (DK, FI, SW) or goal/indicator steering (NO). Overall assumption that HE system development in education is responsibility of the HEIs.
Ministries are monitoring instead of steering education development.



Conclusions (cont.)

4. National research planning through high level of public investments in university research, consisting of a large stable basic component, and growing competitive and targeted components.

High level of university autonomy wrt research prioritising in Denmark

Growing level of university autonomy wrt research prioritising in Finland

Moderate level of university autonomy wrt research prioritising in Sweden
(intention to increase autonomy)

Limited level of university autonomy wrt research prioritising in Norway



Conclusions (cont.)

5. Legal framework less important in government – HEIs steering relationship than negotiations, consultations, contracts/agreements, targets and trust.
6. Amongst other things, because of high level of national funding, relatively limited influence of European context (FP7/ERC) on national research prioritising.