

## Recent Developments in Scandinavian Higher Education

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The 1990s have witnessed fairly drastic changes in public higher education in the Scandinavian welfare states. Put generally, there is a change in the ideal, from the traditional and prestigious model of the Humboldtian research university to the service university. The state by its Ministry of Education has become much more active than before in setting the aims and strategies for higher education. Both in terms of research and education programs the state is now trying to use higher education as a tool for the country's overall economic and industrial development. As a result, the state has made the universities themselves more responsible for finding new sources of revenues and more accountable for goal achievements in research, education, and dissemination.

The strategies used to change the function and role of universities are several. First, the legislation has been changed, in a way that harmonizes the whole sector of higher education and makes the traditional research universities less exclusive than before. Legally, the institutional autonomy is substantially increased. Second, the market for higher education is opening up, which promotes new institutions, and competition. Third, the state is leveling out or even reducing its financial support for higher education. Between 1991 and 1996 state funding for Finnish higher education has been reduced by 16 percent. In Iceland, policymakers are discussing introducing charge student fees, which is a foreign principle in welfare state Scandinavia.

Following these strategies, some more specific measures have been taken in the administration of higher education. The Ministry of Education has required that the institutions try to apply "activity planning" and management by objectives. Familiar terms from business life have made their way into the research university. In order to find new revenues to compensate for reduced public funding, external activities—or the selling of "research-based services"—have been suggested. More systematic evaluation of how resources are now used, are frequently stated as required.

Structural changes are being made in order to promote competitiveness and accountability in the future. Existing

departments of external activities are being reinforced, and new ones established. The degree structure is changing toward the American model. Instead of time-consuming and expensive tracks toward the doctoral degree programs (D.Phil.), the internationally more common model of B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. is already being introduced in all countries of the region. Pressure on the institutions from increased student enrollment (without allocation of more resources) is also a common feature.

It is no surprise that such drastic structural changes in higher education have caused tensions and even conflicts. The universities have a long historical tradition of great autonomy in research and teaching. Critics call the new autonomy for the universities autonomy "to administer poverty." Reduced resources, combined with increased enrollments, make the departments and professors feel they, in fact, have less autonomy than before.

The new budgeting system following the principles of autonomy and accountability shows the differences between disciplines and subjects in "production cost" per student. Also, some subjects or disciplines clearly have better opportunities than others of "selling services." At the same time, in some countries, professors are attacked from the outside, in the media, for being "lazy" or for using their work time for moonlighting. This new financial reality creates tensions and a less favorable working climate among professors. Adding to the personnel problems, is the new role of professors as chairs or deans, having to act as employers toward their peers.

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Faculty are frustrated over the seemingly changed role of the university in the division of labor in society. They fear that the university is moving away from its traditional role as the independent, critical segment in society, becoming primarily an instrument for economic development and serving interests of the state and private business. Within the institution, they think that the administration has increasingly taken power from the professors, that the amount of administrative paperwork has grown, and that some colleagues are more successful in the service university business than are others. Finally, they see some of their own management-oriented colleagues lifted up into the leadership roles of chair, dean, and president, and in these posi-

tions receiving more incentives than do ordinary professors.

Having described a generalized image of Scandinavian higher education, it is, however, fair to end these reflections by pointing to some differences within the region. Even though the trends of the 1990s are common for all the countries, there are differences in pace and level of development.

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What is often termed the “international” or “American” development of higher education started first in Sweden, followed by Finland. These two countries have undergone the most dramatic changes, and their economic situation has been one important reason. First in harmonizing their higher education structures, they have been more eager to go international in their publishing work. The other group—Denmark, Norway and Iceland—has been more “conservative,” maintaining strong institutional autonomy in relation to the state. Norway is beginning the process of internationalization but can, with its oil money, obviously afford to move slowly. For Denmark and Norway the “student rebellion” and extreme democratization of governing bodies in the 1970s, seemed to have reinforced university conservatism toward the state’s needs.

Looking at the research function of the institutions, Sweden and Finland, more than the others, are characterized by efficient research, hierarchical research groups, external financing, competition, lower job security (tenure), and a willingness to adapt to changing conditions. The states have taken a stronger governing role than in the three other countries, where the institutions have been allowed greater independence from the state. There has been no research policy for the institution as a whole, rather the attitude has been, “every professor—his own research policy.” They have been allowed fairly quiet, individually tenured lives. The often painful change now is in the “American” direction.

An assumption is that in the future, Scandinavian higher education will become increasingly homogenous in policies and organization, and, at the same time, more like the dominant international pattern.

## Higher Education in Thailand: Traditions and Bureaucracy

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Higher education as a government function is relatively new in Thailand. The first university, Chulalongkorn University, was founded in 1917; a second university was established in 1933; and three more were founded in 1943. These five universities, all located in Bangkok, were established primarily to train personnel for government service. In the 1960s, three public universities were established outside the capital, one each for the north, the northeast, and the south. Private colleges also appeared around this time, and in 1969 a bill was enacted to govern the establishment and operation of private institutions of higher learning. Additional colleges and universities were founded thereafter, all of which followed the model of the older institutions in terms of mission, organization, and administration.

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***Often what passes for university education is little more than a capacity for passing successive examinations, regardless of whether there has been intellectual growth.***

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Today, there are 65 public and private universities and colleges in Thailand under the supervision of the Ministry of University Affairs, and an additional 150 other educational institutions offering various vocational degree courses that come under supervision of the Ministry of Education and other ministries. Therefore, in terms of numbers of institutions, higher education in Thailand has come a long way since its modest beginning. However, in terms of quality, there is still room for improvement, even at the “older” universities. Recent issues and problems in Thai higher education include: unclear and ambiguous educational aims, inadequate financing, inability to recruit enough qualified lecturers, insufficient numbers of graduates in science and technology to serve the country’s economic development, and an outdated administrative system. Many of these issues and problems are related to the culture and tradition