

# ABSTRACT

Title: Academisation and professionalisation – midwifery education in transition

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This thesis focuses on changes in midwifery education as a result of different social and educational policy reforms, especially the two most recent reforms of higher education, H-77 and H-93. The aim of the thesis is to analyse how demands on professional relevance and a scientific foundation of midwifery education have been affected by changes in the education system and the changes formulated as competence requirements for the profession as well as to identify the conditions that have influenced the study program. The aim is also to shed light on how the tension between professional demands and demands for a scientific foundation has been solved within the framework of the expanded local space of action created following the H-93 reform and which is reflected in the local steering documents.

The theoretical perspectives of the curriculum together with research on professionalisation and the development of the discipline constitute the theoretical framework of the thesis. The source material employed consists of texts in the form of historical and current documents concerning the midwifery profession, midwifery education and the higher education system. These have been analysed and interpreted in three steps. The first step consists of a historical review of changes in the midwifery profession and midwifery education up until the end of the 1960s. The second step comprises a review of how different social and educational policy reforms since the end of the 1960s have affected and changed the design of midwifery education in terms of professional orientation, research connection and the development of a specific scientific foundation. The third step takes the form of a content analysis of the local curricula and syllabi for midwifery study programs between 1993 and 2001, both before and after the two evaluations carried out by the National Agency for Higher Education.

The study shows that midwifery education has both moved away from and drawn closer to the two professional groups physicians and nurses during the work on adaptation, modification and change carried out in different periods of time. Exposed to influence from both directions, the autonomous status of the midwifery profession has been questioned and the position of midwifery education in the education system has been marginalized. The changes having had the greatest impact on midwifery education are the result of a number of educational policy reforms in recent decades. These have either been directly aimed at study programs in the field of health care as a result of health care and medical policy decisions or have been designed to achieve more general reforms of higher education. The academisation resulting from the integration of midwifery education in the higher education system has been a lengthy process. The work on transforming the central intentions into local program planning has resulted in both similarities and variations in the midwifery study programs. The variations applies primarily to the midwifery study programs' scientific foundation and subject development, which are still vague and weak. The tension existing between vocational and academic education can be explained by the fact that the program has still not found its proper balance between professional and academic demands.