



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

Master Degree Project in Innovation and Industrial Management

Reorganisation in the Name of What?

A case study of the organisational changes 2010-2014 at the School of Business,
Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg

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Abstract

The purpose of this study has been to analyse the effects of organisational changes within academia, using the School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg as a case study. Through interviews with academic and administrative staff, perusal of archival data and documentation, and observational data, a comprehensive description of the process as well as the outcomes is given.

The case verifies earlier research with regards to the difficulty in imposing changes with influences of New Public Management in academia. Likewise commonly discussed problems such as bias in representation in working committees in the process towards change are observed.

The main findings of the study show that vertical communication and high involvement needs to be further stressed for successful completion of reorganisations. Furthermore, reorganisations within academia risk putting focus on effects on research and education, even when the main focus of the process at hand may be administrative. A greater acknowledgement for administration and its saying in processes regarding its work ought therefore be considered.

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Background and Study Purpose

Universities increasingly find themselves in a situation where the outer world puts higher and higher pressure on their development towards being more efficient and more productive in terms of highly esteemed research output and educational offerings. A type of organisation that therefore used to be seen as one of a kind with its own game rules, where scientists and students could strive to find new ways to analyse and acquire knowledge, has increasingly started to live under circumstances more resembling that of a company (cf. e.g. McKelvey & Holmén, 2009, and Deiacó et al., 2009).

In Sweden this can be illustrated by the shift over the years from an initial structure where most funding for research and education was based on government grants to the universities, to a situation where only parts of the total funding is rendered this way, the remaining bit being comprised of external funding, applied for in competition between single scholars or research groups. Additionally, international standards and the increased use of ranking systems to compete with other actors within the same field have built in a form of market economy also into the field of basic research (cf. e.g. Deiacó & Melin, 2008).

As a response to the shift in overall structure of the academic world, universities have changed strategies and initiated reorganisations. As put by Deiacó et al. (2012):

“In short, as the role of universities in economic growth and innovation has been increasingly emphasised, so too have pressures on them been raised. First, for them to act strategically at national, regional and global levels, in order to obtain resources for their activities; and second, for them to be more accountable to their stakeholders, and in particular the public sector.”

The University of Gothenburg (henceforth referred to as the University) is no exception when it comes to being affected and influenced by current trends. As at most universities in the country, numerous investigations have been carried out over the years, the last five years marking a particularly intensive period with extensive evaluations taking place within the major areas of responsibility for the university as a higher academic institution, namely research and education. The culmination point of the work was marked by the initiation of the reorganisation project *GU Förnyas* (Renewing the University of Gothenburg), a process that could be seen as the strategic response to the preceding evaluations. The aim was to make the University's operations more efficient as to be able to become even more successful and

thereby lay out the base for its future existence and development. This was further clarified in the University strategy, stating that:

Quality-driven research, education and cooperation in an inspiring environment, strong social responsibility and global engagement enable the University of Gothenburg to contribute to a better future

University of Gothenburg Vision2020

Following the changes at central level, the School of Business, Economics and Law (henceforth referred to as the School), one of eight faculties within the University, in 2011 initiated a restructuring of its internal organisational structure, a main point of departure being to decrease the total number of departments. The overarching goal of the process was stated as:

Within the scope of our mission create the best possible circumstances for our core activities, that is, to produce research and education of highest possible quality.

Study Purpose

As outlined above, academia in general has found itself in a lengthy transition phase, spanning over the last decades, if not even further (cf. Ljungberg, 2011). The pressure on the organisations as such has increased in that the responsibility for acquiring sufficient funding gradually has been shifted more towards the receiving of external funding as opposed to government grants, meaning that strategic positioning and organisational efficiency become key points in the very structure of academic institutions (cf. Luedekke, 1999). Likewise, discussions on the importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration and the discovery of new fields of study are taken more and more seriously as the way to go about in developing higher education for the future (Mosey et al., 2012).

The School presents an interesting case from both these perspective in that it in recent years has been the target of changes of both characters mentioned above, namely an administrative reorganisation for increased efficiency and a restructuring of its departments, one result being the construction of a new, multidisciplinary unit. What also makes it unique is that it is set in the environment of a business school, a setting in which one field of expertise in fact can be considered to be that of management and organisational change.

The purpose of this study is to look more closely at organisational changes within academia, using the School as the object for a case study, the goal being to get a more thorough comprehension of the process behind and the outcomes it renders. Though universities engage in both education and research, this study will focus mainly on the possible effects on research and the organisation as an entity.

The changes studied lie fairly close in time, the last decisions as an effect of the whole process in fact being taken as recently as this spring. The recollection of memories from the actual process can therefore be considered high for those interviewees approached in the study. Likewise, I, in the role of researcher in this case, have previous experience from within the organisation, meaning that the channels for retrieving information can be considered both greater and easier. This way the study is likely to take a more in-depth character than similar studies carried out over a short period of time.

More specifically, the work will be concentrated around the following two questions:

1. *What were the characteristics of the process towards organisational change?*
2. *What are the perceived outcome(s) of the process?*

With these as the overarching research questions, the process and outcomes are analysed in detail, from an academic as well as an administrative point of view, as to see what parts of the organisation were really affected and how.

While much of the previous literature on the topic focuses mainly on academic staff, both with regards to opinions on change and the effects of the changes made, this study adds the dimension of a more thorough analysis of effects for administrative staff in relation to that of academics. The intention of doing so is to be able to give a more nuanced picture of what changes within academic institutions could mean for all groups of employees affected, as the interdependence between the groups for the success of an organisation implies that equal importance should be given to all (cf. e.g. Shattock, 2003).

Limitations

Initial work in outlining the background to the changes carried out at the School showed a next to perpetual pattern in connection between reports and evaluations over the years. An

easy way to draw a line as to how far back in time to go and what to look into and not was therefore initially hard.

Through backwards mapping it soon became evident that the year 2010 could be a good boundary in time, as this marked the actual initiation of the University project GU Förnyas, with an assignment to an evaluation group being issued by the Vice-Chancellor of the University (The organisation of the University of Gothenburg 2012 - an assignment, 2010). Though it might be of value to linger even further back in history, due to time and resource restraints, a further analysis was not possible within the frame of this work. It is worth noting that a more in-depth historical analysis could be of interest for continued research on the topic, for example as to see if for example historical patterns are detectable.

During the chosen time period, the School has seen structural changes of varying kind taking place, for example also with regards to its educational offerings (see Table 2 in the section Empirical Findings below). The Programme in Business and Economics has switched organisational positioning within the School structure and the Graduate School, the unit responsible for educational offerings at master level, has been scrutinised to see whether alternative solutions for its organisation would be preferable. Partly due to time limitations, but also to the fact that the primary focus of this work has been on that of the effects on research outcomes, the mentioned processes have not been included in any greater detail, if at all. Neither has the sustainability report produced in 2012, with a decision on action plans and further actions taken in early 2013, been considered in the work done, as it has not been considered to affect the results of the research questions addressed herein. All processes have however been mentioned in Table 2 for clarity reasons.

Literature Review and Theoretical Implications

Public With a Touch of Private? The Concept of New Public Management

When analysing organisational changes within the academic world it is unavoidable not to bring in the concept of New Public Management (NPM), the idea of which is to apply knowledge and experience from managing in the business world into that of public entities. While the idea has often been criticised, for example due to the more bureaucratic structure and weaker autonomy for ruling at different levels within public organisations, the concept has been widely used and proven positive, and should therefore not be discouraged completely (cf. Boyne, 2002).

The managing of universities is no exception in the public sector when it comes to management influences from the corporate world, nor is it a haven free from opposing views on what is best for the development of said organisations. Deiacco et al. (2012) put forward a discrepancy in views within academia today both as to where decision-making should lay, as well as the importance of autonomy, where academics may push for maintaining these rights as far down as possible in the organisation, as opposed to the ideas put forward in the spirit of new public management, where focus instead is put on a clear professional organisational structure, the likes of what can be found in the corporate world.

The Route to Success is the Route Itself – How to Manage Organisational Change

Frølich (2005) brings in an interesting aspect on that of implementing the ideas of NPM within academia, arguing that ideas for implementation, as well as resistance of the same, is formed using cultural theory and the concepts of individualism, hierarchy, and egalitarianism. The author takes a standpoint that academia more or less per definition opposes the concepts of NPM and that it in doing so needs to find characteristics in its own way of being that inherently would reject named concepts. The author concludes, stating that:

(...) the opposition develops its arguments by referring to individualistic and egalitarian points of view. Thirdly, it is also reasonable to take as a point of departure the basic values of academia, i.e. that autonomy presupposes individualism as a cultural bias and that the element of control in NPM reflects a hierarchical world view."

(Frølich, 2005, p.224)

The implications of the above mentioned would be that to successfully implement NPM within academia, proponents of such changes need to be able to find points of argument that take focus away from a hierarchical ruling in favour of egalitarian and individualistic views.

When the very basics for arguing for the case of implementing changes in accordance with NPM have been set, the next natural step to take into consideration is the proceedings through which said changes are to take place. Piderit (2000) brings in an interesting aspect here, looking not only at the process as such, but also bringing in the development of suggestions for future change and input already at the planning stage. Here the importance of employee involvement on a broad scale when imposing changes to an organisation, are brought forward. While it oftentimes may be the case that a smaller task force, consisting of individuals at different managerial positions, is appointed to discuss and put forward suggestions for major changes before any greater part of the employee group affected is involved, the author argues that a more fruitful way of reaching positive results would be to move the other way around, starting off with widespread discussions in the organisation.

Another way to look at the importance of greater involvement in early stages of a reorganisation process is put forward by Deiac & Melin (2008). The authors discuss the need for reorganisations, collaborations and the joining of actors to meet competition within higher education, but also bring forward the similarities to any other organisations in that change needs to be sprung from the bottom up rather than the opposite as to have a great possibility in succeeding. It is further mentioned that size in itself ought not to be the means of organisational change, but rather decisions should be made based on possibilities for better quality in research and education.

The above mentioned deals primarily with the actual creation of a suggestion for change, however equally important is the actual carrying out of what eventually is decided. Several authors, including Piderit (2000) and Robertson et al. (2009), argue that organisational changes are oftentimes stressed and finalised too quickly, missing out on the importance of on the one hand identifying possible alterations necessary for successful implementation, as well as the importance of not only responding to resistance to change, but also to acquire enthusiasm to the same. Robertson et al (2009) conclude this concept using the following checklist:

- *Have a clear vision and rationale for change – why change, what needs to be changed and the kind of change required*
- *Plan how the change will be brought about, setting out clearly defined objectives and responsibilities*
- *Reflect upon the process at all stages and learn from experience*
- *Be prepared to modify plans in the light of evaluation/new learning*
- *Acknowledge and celebrate milestones achieved along the way, no matter how small*
- *Be aware of unintended outcomes and embrace these as appropriate*
- *Communicate effectively with all members of the team at all stages*
- *Be pre-emptive in dealing with resistance, meet objections openly and constructively*
- *Be patient and keep the momentum going, and*
- *Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the process and its outcomes*

To acquire the desired involvement may however prove difficult. As put by Boyne (2002), public entities prove a lower level of commitment to the own organisation, partly due to their bureaucratic format, but also as a response to the weaker reward structures for work accomplished. Furthermore, to reach a level of consensus around what changes are to be made is often not achieved easily as organisations in general are reluctant to change unless faced with no other option (Robertson et al., 2009). Alterations to the overall view do however occur. As put by Robertson et al (2009):

“As a general rule, academics tend to resist changes which are perceived to threaten their core values and practice, which have a negative impact on individuals and which diminish group autonomy. Resisting both change and being seen as compliant are ingrained attitudes among some academics, hence the proverbial but appropriate metaphor of ‘herding cats’ applies.”

Know Thine Enemy – to know what you do not want as to get what you want

As the purpose of this thesis is to look at the effects of the changes made, and the possible alternative routes the process could have taken as to even further increase the positive impact of the wished for result, one must ask the question of what parameters are worth looking into. The process brought about was explained as an attempt to further enhance the quality of the operations of the organisation as a whole. Factors often considered to have the opposite effect ought therefore to be of interest to bear in mind, as to avoid any unnecessary difficulties along the way. The question is then what quality in operations is defined as. First of all the limitations of this work need to be borne in mind, that is, what is analysed is the effects on research primarily. A good guess, and highly likely answer, from this perspective would then be that highly esteemed research results in the form of for example ground-breaking new theories, alternatively new ways of looking at already existing theories, is what is referred to.

Additionally finding new ways to reach out with results and getting a wide spread of ones operations can be considered complementary to the above stated. All in all, what is put forward could be seen as different aspects of innovative ideas and proceedings. Tidd & Bessant (2009) discuss the very concept of innovation management as a whole, providing the following list of factors considered having negative impact on the innovative operations of an organisation:

- *Dominance of restrictive vertical relationships*
- *Poor lateral communications*
- *Limited tools and resources*
- *Top-down dictates*
- *Formal, restricted vehicles for change*
- *Reinforcing a culture of inferiority (innovation must come from the outside to be good)*
- *Unfocused innovative activity*
- *Unsupporting accounting practices*

(Tidd & Bessant, 2009, p.131)

While the ideas put forward by Tidd & Bessant (2009) handle the potential undesired characteristics that an organisation as a whole can render, a change in itself can also bring with it immediate negative consequences not though of. George (2007) touches upon the concept of usefulness, meaning that a change is made to please a stakeholder. This is something that often is argued as the reason for imposing changes of various kinds, however the author addresses the complexity brought by the concept, as organisations have various stakeholders, and the result of changes meant for positive outcomes might be of the opposite effect for some parties. As put by the author:

“What is useful and creates value for one stakeholder group might harm one or more other stakeholder groups. (...) Thus, perhaps more attention needs to be paid to what is meant by “useful” in this literature and the question of “useful for whom” needs to be addressed”

(George, 2007, p.443)

While George (2007) takes the wider perspective of stakeholders and the effects changes may have on them, Gumport (2000) uses the same argumentation, however from the angle of academic institutions as whole entities, and the fact that changes may be put forward which can be seen as favourable for certain units, however the exact opposite effect may be the outcome for others within the same greater organisation in that they are deprioritised. The

author continues the argumentation, stating that while certain implied changes may be feasible as such, the question of *could* should always be preceded by that of *should*, in that changes in one field could bring with it side effects affecting the whole structure of the greater organisation.

Where are We Heading and What do We Want?

Quality in research and education can be assumed to rest on the basis of creative thinking, constantly pushing existing boundaries in the search for new concepts and ideas. A wish to increase quality ought therefore also imply a wish to increase creativity, and likewise creativity ought to be seen as a key parameter in increasing effectiveness in organisations (cf. George 2007).

Creativity requires creative environments to flourish. A concept increasingly put forward as a route for the future in terms of organisational structure within research is that of constructing cross-disciplinary entities, one reason being that of fostering said creative environments. When looking at the actual outcomes of such changes, and the effects they may have within academia, Mosey et al. (2012) propose an interesting approach when it comes to the rise of multidisciplinary institutes. The authors argue that while the rise in itself can be brought about as a means to create new areas of knowledge, to be able to maintain such environments over time requires that the knowledge obtained is put into practice through traditional university activities such as teaching. This can be contrasted to the views of Robertson et al. (2009) and Frølich (2005) who hold forward the reluctance to change amongst academics and the will to protect the autonomy of already existing units and structures. To achieve the result desired, these obstacles need also to be overcome or the new ideas of constellations in themselves will fail.

Though much focus is put on research output when discussing performance enhancement within higher education, one component that must not be forgotten is that of the administrative staff. Shattock (2003) discusses this in a clear manner, bringing in partly the importance of overall strong infrastructures within universities as to sustain or even enhance quality of operations. Failing in doing so will over time likely lead to gaps in the structures necessary for everyday operations, which will be much more costly to repair than would the price have been if maintenance had instead taken place continuously over time. Likewise, the author brings up the risk in simply seeing administration as a cost, and research as the only

source of incomes. Instead the two ought to be looked upon as complementary to each other as good administration is a prerequisite for keeping universities as organisations floating.

Summary

The perusal of previous research on organisational changes within academia, as outlined above, shows that there are a number of concepts and springing points that need to be borne in mind when analysing the topic. First of all, the basic concept of NPM needs to be understood, as well as the traditional reluctance to the use of the same within the university sector (Boyne, 2002; Deiacio et al., 2012; Frølich, 2005).

While the concept as such may be criticised, the reality is that it is widely used, in more or less evident forms, meaning that the best way to move forward is to learn how to deal with both its introducing and implementation into organisations. To achieve the best result possible, broad involvement by all groups of faculty and all levels, in all stages of the process is a necessity, including in the development of actual suggestions for change, refraining from the use of a top-down approach as a driver for change (Piderit, 2000; Tidd & Bessant, 2009). Likewise, the processes as a whole should not be stressed as this may lead to unfortunate decisions with built-in problems that could otherwise have been avoided. Rather an open mind-set, willing to alternate proposed suggestions should be used (Piderit, 2000; Robertson et al., 2009).

Changes always bring effects, both desired and undesired ones. When imposing change, the questions of whom it is valuable for and how it may affect others must always be borne in mind, as the accumulated effect otherwise risks being negative, despite the positive initial intention (George, 2007; Gumport, 2000).

Also the characteristics of what is being shaped must always be clear, the risk otherwise being that potential in new units is lost (cf. Mosey et al., 2012). Furthermore, focus may risk being put on the cutting of costs and the boosting of activities considered to render incomes, meaning that functions such as administration can be overly scrutinised. While the effects of such actions in the short run may be a cut in costs, the long run implications can be rather the opposite, with a deprived infrastructure for overall operations as a result, lowering the standard of the organisation as a whole (Shattock, 2003).

Methodology

Single Case Study

The points for analysis set out for this work were still heavily part of the organisation as a whole at the time of the study. Though organisational changes appear all over in society, as outlined above, the world of higher education constitutes a particular case that may differ from the common notion. These parameters all argue for the use of a case study, as the method in itself implies to look more thoroughly into the reality of a problem, and where the point of analysis may not be easily distinguished from the situation in which it occurs. Furthermore case studies assume the use of various sources of information for validity reasons (cf. e.g. Yin, 2003). An analysis of the type attempted at in this study would indeed fall flat from the use of for example solely secondary data, as official documentation often does not reveal the actual discussions and feeling behind the decisions taken, nor do they give an image of the perception in the organisation as an effect of what is being implemented.

As outlined above, the purpose of this work has been to analyse one specific event within one sole organisation. Furthermore an initial desire was to base the analysis on a deeper acquaintance with the organisation in question, as to attack the issue from the inside to see what potential points of analysis could be of interest. One could of course easily argue for the drawbacks of only looking at one actor, for example in terms of limitations in the results etcetera. In this specific case it did however fall naturally to limit the study to simply one party, partly due to time and resource restraints in the collection of data, but also seeing that the issue at hand is unique to the case itself. It could of course be argued that similar organisational changes are likely to have occurred at other institutions within the academic world, but to get easy access to that type of data is highly unlikely. The time constraints of the work made it valid that such attempts likely would render a situation where little was known about many things, but nothing in depth was known about anything. From a validity point of view the decision of staying with a single case study therefore fell natural, as this would in itself create a certain level of parsimony in the study (cf. Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

Grounded Theory and Systematic Combining

The intention of this work was to approach the changes made in the School organisation with an as open mind as possible, not letting the search for new details and curiosity in what to look into be hindered by a beforehand set theoretical framework, with a hypothesis for what to find, steering the data collection in a next to biased manner. A concept that naturally falls

into mind when having the outline as presented above is that of grounded theory. As Martin & Turner (1986, p.141) put it:

“Grounded theory is an inductive, theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data”.

It can of course be questioned whether any new theoretical standpoints will be rendered from a project of the limited sort as this one. Rather it might be seen as a way to examine current theories as to detect possible alterations, and in doing so suggest possible points of development to existing frameworks. Likewise, as is also outlined above, the approach has been to have rather free-floating original framework boundaries as to not risk excluding potential interesting points of analysis discovered along the empirical data collection. The concepts of abduction and systematic combining can therefore be seen to be the most suitable methodological explanation of the process in that a constant dialogue back and forth between theory and empirical work has taken place, where implications from empirical findings have lead the focus of the study in sometimes new directions (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

Data Collection

As to get an as accurate image of the process and events analysed, the concept of combining different data collection methods, creating so called triangulation, was used throughout the study (cf. Jick, 1979). To obtain this effect, the following three types of information were collected:

1. **Interviews:** The information rendered this way was to serve the purpose of getting a more personal take on the information found in official documentation with regards to the process, however most importantly to get the direct view from the organisation on the outcomes of what had been carried out and the effects it has had, that is, how it all was perceived by the people affected by it.
2. **Archival Data and Documentation:** This information primarily filled the purpose of getting a holistic picture of the process as a whole, as well as the official formulations up for decision regarding any changes made. Also, the information gave a perspective of how the processes were intended to be perceived by its initiators, through for example communication plans and follow-up documents.
3. **Observational Data:** This set of data, as is further explained below, consisted of observations from the time of the actual processes, that is to say, observations that date

several years back in time. The information recalled this way was meant to function as a contrast point mainly for the stages of the processes, both with regards to the information collected through interviews, as well as archival data and documentation.

In general, the three sources of information were used as complementary sources, meaning that they all in a sense dealt with the same questions, however from slightly different perspectives. That being said, the collection of archival data and documentation could more be considered as the setting of the official background and current official standpoints on all changes made, while especially the interviews rather served as a contrasting point as the “real life” version of what had happened.

Below follows a more thorough explanation of the three categories, as well as the ways in which the information was collected.

Interviews

As the process and outcomes analysed in this study had presumable effects on all staff at all levels within the School, a spectrum of individuals from both department and school level was desirable. Furthermore, examination of official documentation on the process showed that both academic and administrative functions were affected by the changes made, meaning that representatives from both categories of employees would be to prefer.

As is explained above, the processes at the School had the end result of going from seven departments to four. To get the opinions both of representatives of the new units as well as the old therefore felt essential, as to be able to get a full picture of the effects of the measures taken. With these three criteria in mind the following list of potential interviewees was rendered:

Table 1 - Interviewees

Academic Staff	Administrative Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative for School Management Team (<i>1 individual interviewed</i>) • Department Heads for School structure post changes (<i>4 individuals contacted, 3 interviewed</i>) • Department Heads for School structure pre changes (<i>4 individuals interviewed</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative for administrative staff at School Level (<i>1 individual interviewed</i>) • Department administrative coordinators for School structure post changes (<i>4 individuals interviewed</i>)

In total, 13 individuals (eight academic staff and five administrative staff) were contacted, out of which 12 responded positively. Out of the 12, nine had also been actively engaged in the working committee developing the result at hand for the School. As is explained below in the Empirical Findings section, the working committee referred to all in all consisted of 13 individuals, meaning that a majority of the involved were subjects for interviews, covering representatives for all levels of the organisation, as well as academic and administrative staff.

The person that did not respond was the Head of Department of one of the units least affected by the changes at the School level, meaning that although the lack of complete fulfilment affects the results somewhat, the effect can be considered minor. One of the interviewees covered two roles outlined above, namely that of Department Head both pre and post the changes carried out.

All interviews were carried out face to face at the respective individuals' offices within the School premises in Gothenburg. The duration was set to approximately 30 minutes, as not to take up too much of the interviewees' time, as well as making the data collected manageable. All interviews were, with the permission of each interviewee granted, recorded and later transcribed into text.

A semi-structured approach was used as to attempt avoiding response bias due to too directed questions (cf. Bryman & Bell, 2011). In addition, the desire of the interviews was to get the recollection of events from the perspective of each individual, and not in accordance with a pre-set outline of what had occurred. Seeing the limited time allocated for each interview, a fear was also that a too extensive structure would only render semi-finished responses. An interview guide with only a handful of set questions to cover was therefore constructed, using knowledge on the official stand on the process and outcomes as such, from the perusal of archival data and official documentation on the matter. The questions were the following:

- 1. What are your views on the organisational changes carried out over the last couple of years?*
- 2. What have the changes meant for your unit?*
- 3. One of the main reasons for the change has been to increase efficiency, what is your view on that?*
- 4. Opportunities for new research areas and collaborations were to spring from the new structure, what is your take on that?*

The questions were based on a will to capture the whole process and proceedings, from the initial changes at University level to those at the School level. The questions were not always expressed exactly as outlined above, but rather functioned as a way for the interviewer to keep the conversations within the desired boundaries, as the topic in itself was very open for interpretations. It was however made sure that the essence of all questions was covered in all interviews for the sake of comparability of rendered responses.

Archival Data and Documentation

Seeing the vastness of the various processes, as well as the fact that all procedures had been carried out within the frame of a public agency, putting high demands on openness and the archiving of any materials produced, documentation and archival records were considered to be of great interest for the analysis as a whole. This way potential bias rendered through false recollection by interviewees, or me as an observer, could be minimised, but also a point of reference for analysis could be created in contrasting what was being said in interviews and what was officially stated in documentation of official decision-making etcetera, that is, to create a triangulation effect (cf. Jick, 1979).

Data was mainly collected from the University and School webpages. The documents retrieved can be divided into two main groups, namely:

1. *Official minutes and ratified documents from boards and other decision-making entities within the University and the School, and*
2. *Information materials regarding the processes carried out in recent years.*

Observation Data

Since 2012, I have witnessed the operations of the School more upfront in that I first spent a full year working with student-related issues as the Head of the Committee on Education at the School Student Association, and later was employed as Accreditations Project Assistant within the Faculty Office of the School.

During the time as engaged in the Student Association, I also served as student representative in numerous groups related to the organisational changes, both at the University and School levels. For the purpose of this work, this means that I also possess certain amounts of observation data, albeit in the form of recollection of memories from previous years. So for example, I held the role as student representative in the working committee referred to in the Interviews section above, meaning that in one sense, yet one more of the committee members

can be considered to be covered in this study, now summing up to 10 out of 13, covering all different categories of members (academic staff, administrative staff, and students).

The objectivity in this data could of course be questioned. Nevertheless it serves as an interesting point of reference and discussion as it brings in yet another point of view of what actually took place in meetings and discussions prior to decision-making.

Data Analysis

The data collected throughout the process of this work has been analysed in several steps. First of all, as mentioned above, all interviews were transcribed into writing as to enable coding of the findings, both with regards to specific events within the processes analysed, as well as to attitudes and perceptions of the occurred events. By comparing the results from the interviews, partly to each other, but also to the findings from the archival data and documentation, as well as the observational data, initial implications could be detected. Using the concepts of abduction and systematic combining, as explained above, the results were furthermore put into the context of previous research on the topic as to detect possible similarities, as well as potential new discoveries.

Research Trustworthiness

As explained above, the process of this case study has entailed the collection and analysis of data of various forms. The triangulation effect rendered thereof ought therefore have created a sufficient level of credibility for the data.

Seeing that a specific case has been analysed, including the fairly unique situation of processes taking place at numerous levels simultaneously, makes the information rendered, at least to a certain extent, dependable on the specific situation, also implying a level of difficulty in transferring the results fully to other cases. At the same time, the topic analysed, as is also proven by the literature review, is fairly common within the academic world today, meaning that though the specific setting of course varies, the results rendered from the analysis ought to be at least somewhat transferable to other cases within the same area.

As mentioned above, I have had hands on experience of actually being part of the processes analysed. The question of objectivity in both data collection and analysis is therefore of highest relevance. The fact that a broad spectrum of interviewees was chosen, representing both administrative and academic functions, increases the validity of the data rendered

through that processes. Likewise, the active choice to use semi-structured interviews with only a few open-ended questions as guideline can be seen as an attempt to, to the extent possible, lower the possible bias in the data collection. Yet again, the choice to use three different types of sources of information, bringing in both official statements and more subjective approaches from interviewees can further be seen as way to increase the confirmability of what is expressed.

Empirical Findings

As to give an as clear picture as possible of the findings rendered throughout the case study, the following section takes a chronological structure, that is, starting off with the process and underlying factors leading up to it. The results rendered from the different methods used are therefore mixed as to present the full picture at once.

The table below presents the main events taken place at the University and the School respectively during the years analysed in the study. Please note that all processes and reports are not used as points of analysis in the following sessions, but are rather pointed out as to get the full holistic picture of setting in which the main point of interest, namely that of the reorganisation of the School, has taken place.

Table 2 – Important Processes and Decisions 2010-2014 – an overview

University of Gothenburg	School of Business, Economics and Law
<p>2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University research evaluation RED10 conducted • Initiation of the organisation evaluation project GU förnyas • First report of the project GU förnyas 	<p>2010</p> <p><i>No processes of relevance</i></p>
<p>2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of the results of RED10 • Initiation of the University education evaluation BLUE11 (<i>not subject for analysis</i>) • Publication of the report on the University's actions within innovation and entrepreneurship, IE2011 (<i>not subject for analysis</i>) 	<p>2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department reorganisation initiated • Organisational move of the administrative unit for the Programme in Business and Economics (<i>not subject for analysis</i>) • Investigation of the administrative structure of Graduate School (<i>not subject for analysis</i>)
<p>2012</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final suggestion for new organisational structure of the University presented • Implementation of new Rules of Procedure and Authority Policy for the entire University organisation 	<p>2012</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision on new department structure • Decision on new structure for Graduate School (<i>not subject for analysis</i>) • Initiation of investigation on support mechanisms within the School (<i>not subject for analysis</i>)* • Adoption of School Strategy 2012-2016
<p>2013</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full implementation of organisational change • Publication of the University strategic document Vision2020 	<p>2013</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full implementation of new department structure • Gothenburg Research Institute breaks out from the Department of Economy and Society
<p>2014</p>	<p>2014</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gothenburg Research Institute constitutes an independent research unit within the School

** This investigation was not further acted upon as a response to the final outcomes of the process GU Förnyas and can therefore be considered abundant for this analysis.*

2010 – the Commence of Restructuring

As outlined in the Background section above, the University Management Team in 2010 initiated a vast process of restructuring the internal organisation. The reasons for this can best be described through the following two quotes from the assignment given to the initial investigators on the matter:

“In conclusion, the present organisational structure is not as effective as it could be. For example, the University’s collective competence and academic breadth are not fully utilised.”

“The overarching challenge is to design a well-functioning organisational structure without sacrificing a good academic tradition.”

(The University of Gothenburg 2012 – an Assignment, 2010)

Though the initial directives included many parts that were never realised when reaching the decision and implementation phases of the process, one part that did stick was that of the increased responsibilities that were to be shifted to the department level. The preparatory work concluded that for this shift to be feasible it was necessary for this level of the organisation to hold a certain, often bigger, size. As put in the assignment:

“A Department must be of sufficient size in order to carry out its tasks in a satisfactory manner.”

(The University of Gothenburg 2012 – an Assignment, 2010)

At the same time as the suggested structures wanted to shift power downwards in the organisation, a will and belief was that the organisation as a whole also was in great need of a clarification of the delegation of authority, as well as a clearer focus on decision making taking place primarily in the line management (i.e. Vice-Chancellor – Dean – Head of Department), all with the purpose to make the organisation and its responsibilities as a public authority clearer.

When bringing up the reorganisation of the University in the interviews with representatives from the School, the views and opinions differ somewhat, both on the reasons behind it, but also on the potential success of the outcomes. Some interviewees believed the shifts both necessary and good, as is demonstrated by the following quote by one of the Heads of Department interviewed:

“We have to integrate our systems and routines and especially research needs to be able to be integrated across departments and faculties. And so the work on possible organisational changes began. As the work proceeded it more came to focus on working routines, delegations of authority, and cooperation and systems (...) so the whole thing of collaboration within research was no longer the most essential part (...).”

Others expressed doubts around the uniqueness, as well as fit, of an organisational change of the type witnessed. The quote below, by a Head of Department, sets the process in a more national perspective, as well as in a comparison to other organisational types:

“And then comes the autonomy reform. (...) Instead of becoming more autonomous we immediately turn into the likes of everybody else. (...) The problem is that it becomes very messy when you introduce some type of linear structure (...) into a professional organisation governed from the other end so to speak, where it is not the manager who decides how to deal with issues, but rather each and everyone who teaches in the lecture hall.”

Furthermore, the underlying preparatory work leading up to the suggestion put on the table at the end was questioned. As put by another Head of Department:

*“Perhaps they should have done the calculations properly first, before everything was launched, and said that ok, now we have all the game rules set. Not the other way around (...).
If they were to initiate a reorganisation they should have started in the other end, asking themselves ‘Ok, what is it that we need?’ (...) But that wasn’t the way it was done, but rather they said ‘Ok, we need to create some kind of conformity here, let’s try to get rid of all the anomalies’ (...).”*

Certain voices also claim that while the restructuring as such was good, a project in the form of a vast reorganisation would not necessarily have had to be the outcome, but rather changes could have been made through other measures. The following two quotes by an administrative representative for the School level illustrates the opinion in a clear manner:

“So many parts were good the way I see it, but I don’t believe it was necessary to reorganise to achieve the desired results.”

“But we believed that these changes could have been made without a reorganisation that focused so much on the administrative staff and made them so worried. The amount they have had to suffer for so little, well... but we simply have to let that be bygones now and move on and find good parts, because the end result will be good, but it’s not thanks to the reorganisation...”

During the initial stages of the University process GU Förnyas I served as the Head of the Committee on Education at the Student Association of the School. In this role I was appointed

student representative in numerous working committees as well as reference groups for the work that was done. If looked at from a bigger perspective, the process was formed by the continuous scepticism put forward both by the faculties of the University, as well as single departments. While there was a fairly common view that certain processes, mainly from an administrative perspective, would do good from some type of uniform structure, certain doubt was raised with regards to the implications of a stronger hierarchy in terms of governance, where the former collegial decision structure was to take a step back in favour for the line management structure, meaning that decision power was to move from boards to positions, such as Dean and Head of Department. That being said, the opinions on the matter did vary greatly, also within the School.

At the time of the initiation of the processes at University level, numerous debate articles on the topic, written by various professors as well as alumni within the organisation, were published in the University paper GU Journalen. Scepticism both with regards to the means and objectives of the work carried out was being put forward, the springing points oftentimes being that of a concern for greater bureaucratisation, a weakening of the collegial influence in the organisation as a whole, as well as doubts as to whether the changes proposed in fact could help cutting costs within the organisation and thereby free more resources to research and education.

2011 – Continuation of Central Processes and Initiation of Local Ones

The University Level

2011 marked the end of the initial part of GU Förnyas and a suggestion for a continued process was presented to the University Board for decision. As part of the process, all faculties and departments, alongside numerous other stakeholders, were invited to comment on the suggestion that was to be put forward to the University Board. From the School, both a common response, as well as individual ones per department were forwarded to the University. Both minor detail changes as well as greater opposition towards certain suggestions, such as prolonged mandate periods for deans and heads of department, were pointed out.

In the concluding remarks of the official School response, ratified by the School Faculty Board, the at the time still on-going evaluation processes of the University research and education activities were being addressed, the School stating it to be risky to initiate and

proceed with the reorganisation before a thorough analysis of the results of the mentioned processes. As stated in the official response from the School:

“From our point of view, the chosen path also implies evident risks of hindering the efficient implementation of concrete measures needed as a response to the evaluation results, seeing that the organisation at this point in time will find itself in the middle of a restructuring process. (...) The School therefore believes the best thing to do would be to await the results of these two evaluations before proceeding with the reorganisation.”

(Dnr A1 2883/10. Free translation by the author)

In 2011 the summarising report of the University-wide research evaluation project RED10 was published. The report concluded detailed evaluations of all departments at the University, looking at research activities from various perspectives. Seeing that this thesis deals solely with the case of the School, only the parts related to this unit have been analysed.

The evaluators were to follow a number of criteria in its work, namely:

- Quality (international comparability and innovative power)
- Productivity (scientific production)
- Uniqueness
- Relevance (scientific, social and socioeconomic significance)
- Organizational capacity (flexibility, control and leadership)
- Interactive vitality

(Holmgren & Bertilsson Uleberg, 2011, p.30)

Seeing that this thesis deals with the overall organisational aspect of the School, the criteria *Organizational capacity* falls naturally as the most important to look further into and focus on. The criterion was further explained as

“a criterion which concerns the internal structure of the unit. In addition, the experts were asked to assess the capacity of the unit for initiating and successfully implementing the work it has planned.”

(Holmgren & Bertilsson Uleberg, 2011, p. 31).

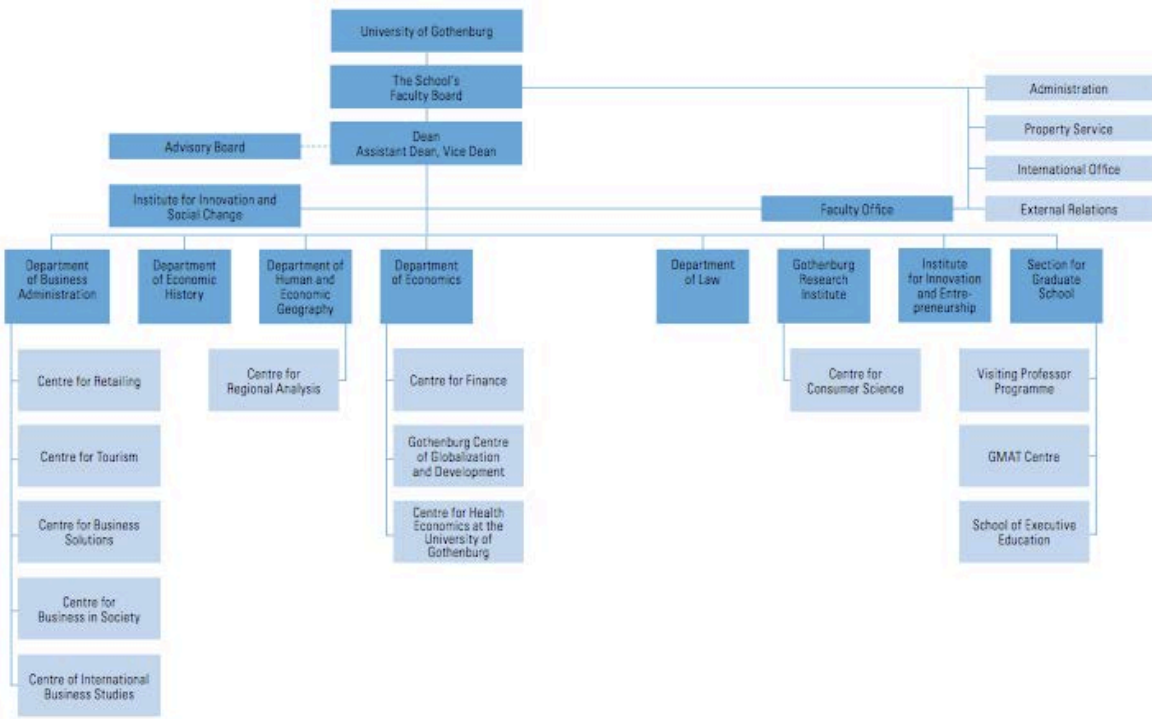
When analysing the report from the perspective of the School, it soon becomes evident that the view on the organisational state of being differs greatly between the different departments. While the Department of Economics and Gothenburg Research Institute (GRI) are not in any particular way pointed out as in need of restructuring, though the size in general of all

departments is pointed out as fairly small, but normal set in relation to its competing institutions in the Northern European region, other units, such as the Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE) and the Department of Economic History, are more directly pointed out as being too small to be able to carry out research within all fields mentioned in their profiles (cf. eg. Holmgren & Bertilsson Uleberg, 2011, p.493 and p.503). What this displays is that there are signs of the smaller departments within the School being pointed out as potentially benefitting from becoming parts of greater units (Economic History and Human and Economic Geography), alternatively by decreasing the scope of their studies (IIE).

The School Level - Initiation of School Reorganisation

While comments on the processes at University level were being handled, new actions were taken at the School level. With the consent of the School Faculty Board, the School Management Team initiated the work on what was to become a new department structure. The assignment was to decrease the number of departments from the at the time seven units, as displayed in Figure 1 below, the initial suggestion from the School Management Team being that of reforming into three units based on the current departments of Business Administration, Economics, and Law.

Figure 1 – School Organisational Chart 2010, Pre Department Reorganisation



A working committee was appointed to deal with the matter at hand, the composition of which was the following:

- The School Dean
- Head of the Faculty Office
- The School Communication Officer
- All Heads of Department, including the Head of GRI, in total seven individuals
- Two representatives for the administrative staff at department level
- One student representative

The goal of the process was further broken down into the four following points:

1. *To increase the possibilities for cross-fertilisation of education and research within the scope of complete academic environments at the School of Business, Economics and Law.*
2. *To decrease and preferably eliminate the duplication of work within the core activities of the School.*
3. *To see to it that the research environments at the School of Business, Economics and Law hold the critical size necessary for dynamic development and production of high quality research.*
4. *To promote efficiency and quality in the supporting activities as to lower costs, making more resources available to core activities (education and research).*

(D nr V 2011/184)

When being brought up in interviews, the views on the reason for the restructuring of the School varies, especially between levels within the organisation. A majority of the people interviewed, more precisely 10 out of 12, were representatives for the department level.

Representatives for the Faculty level held forward a united view. While they acknowledged the impact of the central processes as a trigger for the initiation of the local process, the actual reasons for it were not the same. Rather this was a process that had already been discussed within the School, regardless of the ideas sprung at the University level, and the need to do something had already been detected. The fact that new directives for administrative structures was part of the outcome of the University process could therefore rather be seen as a good reason for initiating a process at School level sooner rather than later. As stated by the representative for the School Management Team interviewed:

“First of all I firmly believe that we had reformed the department structure at the School regardless of GU förnyas. There was a clear need for such a change. We saw and imbalance between the departments, in certain

cases there were devastating internal disputes between groups within departments, which hampered the development of research and education.”

When discussing the same matter with representatives of the Department level, the view does not cohere with the statements expressed above. Though the view on the effects and possibilities of the outcomes of what was initiated varied, there was a consensus that the changes made at the School level were either unclear in their meaning and purpose, or were considered a direct consequence of the processes simultaneously carried out at the University level. The following quote by one of the Heads of Department interviewed gives a good picture of the opinions expressed:

“Well, the changes that took place within our department were tightly connected to those taking place at the University level. (...) What is worth mentioning here is that this has been a process taking place under great resistance. It has been perceived as an administrative logic, a reform coming from the top down. It is by no means something that has sprung from the bottom up, but rather something that the Vice-Chancellor has decided, and now this is the way it is supposed to be and we simply have to make it work.”

Following the decision from the School Faculty Board that a review of the department structure was to take place, I, in my role as the Head of the Committee on Education at the Student Association, was appointed student representative in the working committee that was to produce a final suggestion for a new organisation of the School. What this entailed was to participate in the general working committee meetings, as well as being responsible for the letter of comment from a student perspective with regards to the suggestions put forward. A general sense that can be recalled from these sessions is that of reluctance to change and a seemingly lack of understanding for the means behind the actions taken. Much energy and focus was in general put on the strengths of the already existing structures, and reasons for not pushing through anything new. Likewise, focus was directed towards the fact that at the time of action, the processes at University level, following the investigating work and restructuring planning, was yet to be finalised, meaning that new directives from the University level were likely to occur within a near future. A wish for postponing the work carried out at the School was therefore held forward.

A clear difference between the different units represented in the group could also be observed. While as the, at the time, three bigger departments seemed fairly calm, the smaller departments rather came into the discussion with a feeling of threat of their own existence.

This could also be observed in the initial discussions where, most likely unintentionally, nearly patronising ways of arguing were used, the bigger departments declaring their will to take on the smaller units as part of their organisations. Conspiracy thoughts were also risen with regards to why the suggested structure was formed the way it was. The following two quotes, by two of the Heads of Department interviewed, display these thoughts clearly:

“The organisational change [at the School] was driven in a way that mirrored the origin of the members of the Management Team.”

“If one is think in terms of conspiracies one also needs to look at the Management Team at the time. How come we have a Management Team whose departments stay put, unaffected by the changes all three?”

The process both showed great proof of will to cooperate and resistance at the same time. While the initial suggestion, meaning that the School was to be divided into three departments based on the already existing structures Business Administration, Economics, and Law, was refused completely by those losing their current status as departments, these units at the same time displayed ability for cooperation in that a new suggestion for an alternative structure, which later also became the end result, was created in a relatively short period of time, meaning that the School department structure would entail four units, namely:

1. **Department of Business Administration**, the main structure of which would remain the same, however with the addition of the field Economic Geography from the previous Department of Human and Economic Geography
2. **Department of Economics**, the structure of which would remain untouched
3. **Department of Law**, the structure of which would remain untouched
4. **Department of Economy and Society**, a new unit consisting of the old Department of Human and Economic Geography (excluding the subunit Economic Geography), Department of Economic History, Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and Gothenburg Research Institute.

In putting forward the proposal above, the old units, constituting the future Department of Economy and Society, formed arguments for its cause based on 1) already existing common grounds and 2) possible future development of research areas as a result of the new structure.

At the same time, there were also clear indications that the suggestion in itself had been formed based on the will to remain independent from the greater departments already present within the School. As put by one of the Heads of Department interviewed:

“So this department was created by three old departments that wanted to maintain their old identities, keeping the impact of this reform as limited as possible.”

At the same time, a contrasting pole to the above explained could be observed, mainly with regards to the School Management Team, which found itself in a situation of not receiving sympathies for its standpoints and underlying argumentation. A different suggestion, as explained above, was put forward and gained the support from a majority of the members of the working committee, something that the Management Team did adhere to, however with a standpoint that it did not believe this to be the best result achievable, but nevertheless a feasible solution. This was also mirrored in the interviews carried out in the process of this work. As put by the representative for the Management Team interviewed:

“This lead to a new department structure which, and that I must admit, wasn’t the one I personally believed to be the optimal one. At the same time this type of change can’t be carried out without acceptance amongst colleagues. And that means that you mustn’t let the best, what I believe to be the best, stand in the way for something that is good enough.”

As for the three bigger departments, the response to what was put forward cannot be recalled as neither cheering nor booing, but rather a next to indifferent approach was taken, simply stating that while some gains could have been seen with bringing more areas into their organisational spectra, the importance was not as big as to be worth fighting over.

The process and the work carried out by the working committee did entail certain levels of uncertainty. As stated by one of the department administrative coordinators:

“Well I must say I felt there was often a sense of confusion. From my perspective, I felt that it was all about making sure that the units were big enough to be able to carry this administrative [change] (...) so from an administrative point of view I think the end result was satisfactory. But I believe we were put in an impossible situation (...) The guidelines from the University were so strong when it came to the idea of complete academic environments (...) So in that sense I believe we failed in that we never came to a consensus on how to look at things, because that never happened.”

2012 – From Ideas to Decisions

At the School Faculty Board meeting on March 28, 2012, a decision for a new department structure within the School was taken, following the new suggestion put forward within the working committee, that is, to divide the School into four departments.

In the documents for decision distributed to the members of the Faculty Board, the following points were put forward as positive consequences of the changes:

- *Promotes cross-disciplinary collaboration*
- *Creates a department structure responding to the demands of the new rules of procedure as stated by the University*
- *Strengthens the creation of competence within the area of International Business and Trade*
- *Strengthens the research and education for all included subject areas through a stable subject structure*
- *Resolves earlier internal problems within the organisation*
- *Creates possibilities for the creation of an efficient support structure*

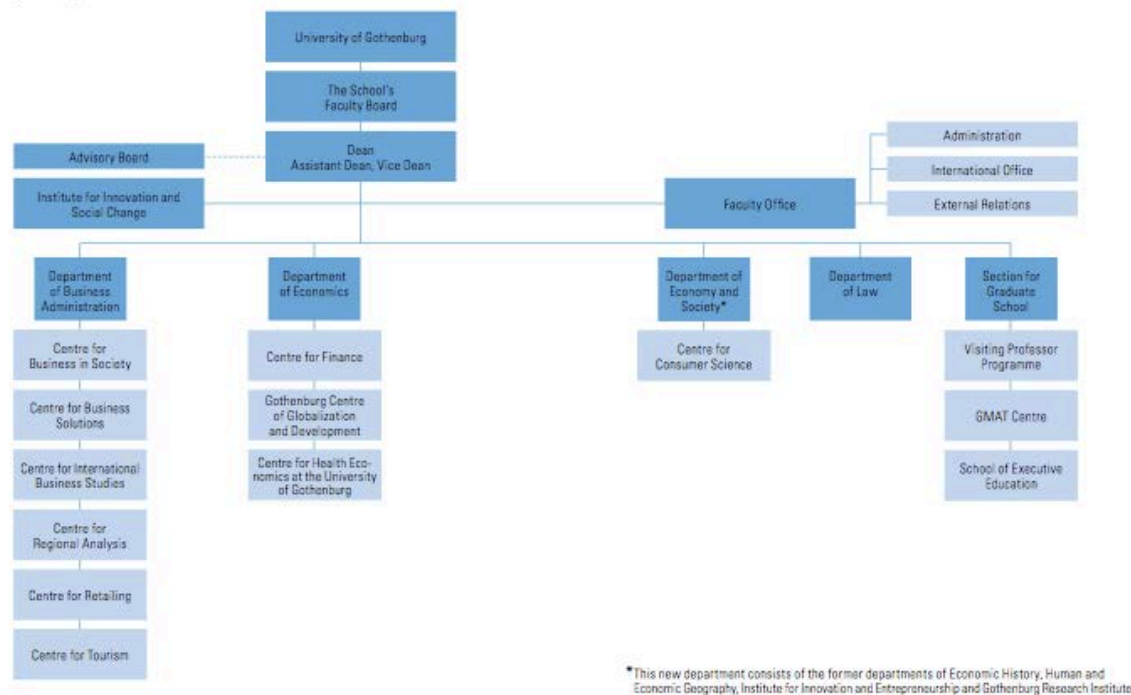
(D nr V 2012/116)

At the same time the document makes clear that the reorganisation process must not have as an outcome that the existence of current subject areas is threatened, however that a real transition into one unit in terms of administration and governance is essential.

2013 – Work Completed - Almost

As of January 1, 2013, both the reorganisations of the School as well as the University were to reach their end point, seeing the new system launched at full, the School officially being organised as displayed in Figure 2 below. That being said, interviews witness that this was not fully the case, but rather that calibrations were still to be made to meet all the prerequisites of the new structures, for example in terms of staffing on the administrative side.

Figure 2 – School Organisational Chart 2013, Post Department Reorganisation

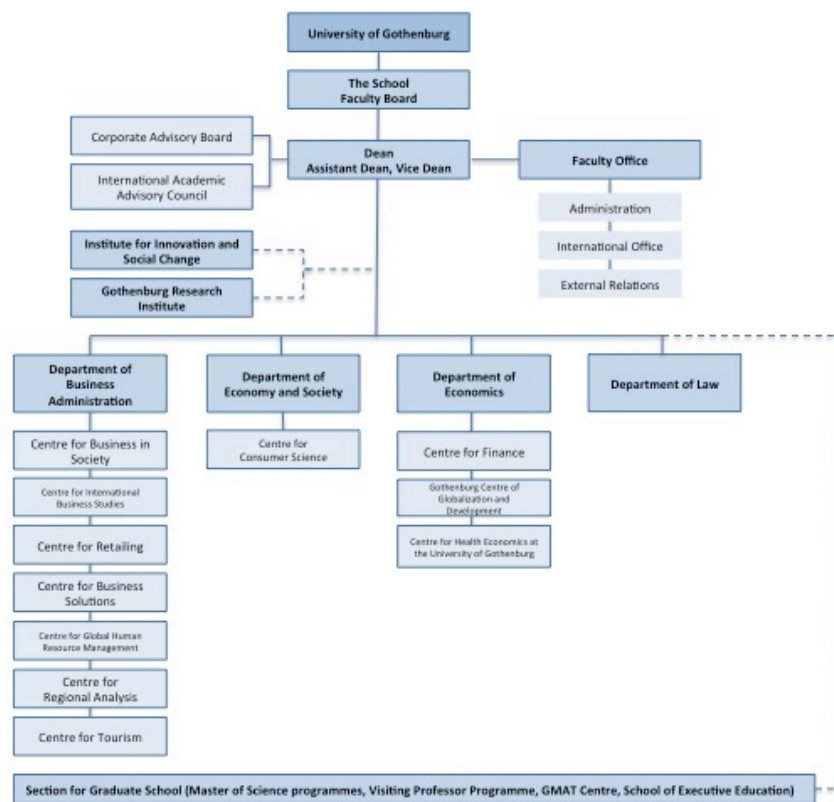


What should also be mentioned here is the fact the unit GRI through a decision in the School Faculty Board on December 5, 2012, was granted a prolonged period of time for being integrated fully into its new organisational position within the Department of Economy and Society. What the decision entailed was that the unit was to be a part of the new department as of January 1, 2013, however that it still remained autonomous in terms of economy and staffing matters.

2014 – Where Are We Now? Outcomes and future implications

Over a year after the decision to prolong the implementation period of the new organisational structure within the School, a new revised structure has been agreed on, meaning that GRI no longer will be part of the Department of Economy and Society, but is to constitute an autonomous research institute, leaving the School with a final structure as displayed in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 – School Organisational Chart 2014



The question is how the end result has been greeted in the organisation. When looking at the interview material rendered, from this point of view it is of interest to look at the outcome of the process as a whole from two different perspectives or categorisations, namely organisational position and professional role. The reason for this divide is that the effects, as will be displayed below, are perceived in clearly different ways both between levels of organisation, but mainly between administrative and academic staff, meaning that a categorisation of this kind is necessary in understanding the actual outcomes of the above explained process.

Organisational Perspective

If we first look at the results from an organisational point of view, the interviewees could be grouped into the following categories, representing fairly different standpoints when it comes to the effects of the organisational changes at School level, for obvious reasons:

1. *Department representatives for units experiencing no greater changes to structure from the reorganisation*

2. *Department representative from units experiencing great changes to structure from the reorganisation*
3. *School representative*

Group 1 had the standpoint of more or less status quo, as only minor changes, if any, to their composition occurred. They all expressed a probability of this opinion to differ in terms of the representatives of *Group 2*, meaning that an understanding of the possible effects of what had occurred was present.

Group 2 on the other hand witnessed great effects on the everyday work since the start of the implementation phase. Here the views of the actual outcomes varied. On the one hand, there were those who were highly sceptic to the concept as a whole, seeing highly undesired effects on the daily operations. As put by a Head of Department interviewed:

“It has created a huge internal sense of insecurity (...) people have stood up and walked out the door.”

On the other hand, there were those holding a more neutral view, acknowledging some correctness in the reasons for restructuring, such as vulnerability in terms of administrative functions due to small size prior to reorganisation, something that is displayed in the following quote by a different Head of Department:

“We were a number of very small units that were joint together, so of course there were some efficiency gains to be made from a merger.”

Nearly all did hold forward positive effects on administration as an effect of the restructuring, however implications of the same sort when it comes to research were not seen as evident, at least not as of now.

A problematic point held forward by several was that of the yet to be completed relocation to common office areas, an issue creating problems with the overall coming together as one unit, as well as full acceptance for new administrative structures and routines.

Group 3 held forward an opinion that while details were still to fall into place, overall the restructuring had gone according to plan with positive results. Here, the opinion that the prior

structure contained certain harmful environments due to disagreements between groups within former departments was held forward, and an expression of relief of the same post changes.

Profession Perspective

When analysing the data from the point of view of professional role, the interviewees could be divided into two groups, namely

1. *Academic staff*
2. *Administrative staff*

While answers to a certain degree cohere between the two groups with regards to the individuals' groupings in accordance with the division based on organisational structure, one clear difference can be seen, namely that of the view of the role of administrative staff and functions.

Starting off with *Group 1* there is on the one hand a great acceptance for the need of administrative functions and the changes that these individuals have gone through over the last couple of years or so. At the same time there is an overall underlying feeling, surging for further reduction of administration to the greatest extent possible. There is also an overall view that the changes as imposed by the University reorganisation did not bring about any greater effects on the activities carried out. As put by one of the Heads of Department interviewed:

"It is my believe that the operations continue as normal."

When talking to members of *Group 2* it soon becomes evident that the views differ. Here you can see tendencies, at least within certain units, of feeling great pressure and increased workload as a consequence of the changes in recent years. There is also witnessing of being pointed out as the main subject of restructuring from the University level, creating a feeling of being a burden on the overall operations of the organisation. As expressed by the administrative representative for the School level:

"Well so education and research are core activities, but these supporting structures that we are talking about, the administration, we are supposed to administrate to make as easy as possible to deliver education and research of high quality. So like all other parts [education and research] this should be included in the core activities, and not be seen as some weird external part."

Both Group 1 and 2 witnesses that it has been hard to fully fulfil ones duties due to the lack of normative decisions from the University level, which at the time of implementation were held forward as part of the Delegation of Authority Policy within the University as a whole. There is however a slight sense of hope that in time positive results will be gained, however not to a revolutionary extent. The following quote by one of the Heads of Department displays this standpoint well:

“Of course, now we are not as many heads of department, we’re four. And of course it’s easier to meet and discuss when you are four rather than seven. But not in any substantial way. We have not been affected in that sense.”

One thing that all interviewees agreed on was the lack of fulfilment of the wish to liberate more resources for research and education. The common conception was instead rather that what was displayed in fact more could be described as a restructuring of costs between levels within the organisation, and an increase in the professionalism and efficiency of administrative work tasks. As put by one of the Heads of Department:

“The overhead costs at the faculty level have decreased. But as an effect of this administrative change, the overhead at department level has risen equally. (...) So what has happened is that money has been moved around, numbers have ended up in new places. It’s all really ridiculous.”

New Department, New Routines?

As explained above, the main result of the School reorganisation process was the creation of the new Department of Economy and Society. One issue that was pointed out during the process leading up to the end result was the fact that the units that were to unite were not located together, but in fact were spread out at four different geographic locations. Though a decision on a relocation, or rather the creation of a co-location, was taken early on in the process, the route to achieving the goal was bumpier than expected, leading to a situation where the new structure came in place before the move to common premises took place. This fact was pointed out as troublesome by several of the interviewees, for example by one of the Heads of Department interviewed:

“The administrative structure becomes more problematic, for no matter how you look at it, it is more difficult to be spread out on four different locations, communication-wise and so on.”

As of today, the full move of all units has not been completed, the most recent bid being that so should happen by end 2014.

The question of whether the newly formed unit in fact will become united or not remains to be seen. As displayed above, opinions within the group itself that the purpose of being combined in fact was to be able to remain in old structures gives implications that such a transition might not come easily. Likewise the following observation by one of the administrative coordinators interviewed, albeit not the one representing the Department of Economy and Society, gives an outside view of what is now in place:

“So they never did the work of creating the complete environment that was suggested within that department as to se how they could function as a greater unit (...) so from the perspective that they didn’t do that, but rather that IIE and Economic History and Human Geography and GRI were kept in their current form, all based on the thought that everything is to remain the same, the only difference being that the administrative support is combined.”

Related to the above stated is the fact that the new unit comprised a multidisciplinary entity. As expressed in the goals of the process, outlined above, one desire of the restructuring was the potential of creating new environments for cross-disciplinary collaborations. This view was however not shared to any greater extent by the interviewed academic representatives for the departments. The following quote by one of the Heads of Department summarises it all fairly well:

“If you think that research, cross-disciplinary research can be sprung this way [through new organisational structures], then you have probably never done research in the first place. What creates that is the meeting of individual researchers who believe they have something in common (...), not that they come from departments with similar structures. (...) And it’s the same thing here at the School; you don’t achieve collaborations between the departments through this reorganisation.”

Analysis

How Did We End Up Here?

With the findings above as a basis, let us now return to the initial research questions of this work. First of all, what was the process forward formed like? Here we need to bring in two parts, namely that of the University reorganisation and that of the School.

The University, as explained above, initiated an extensive process with numerous investigations preceding the actual reorganisation. At the same time, once the reorganisation was actually launched, with the appointing of two external evaluators to take on a preparatory investigation for what possibilities might be preferable, the University Management Team did so with an assignment containing fairly specific desired outcomes. The answers from the units within the University once the evaluators presented their initial findings did however give proof of an opposing opinion to that held forward by the University Management Team. The School was not an exception in this group of critics, though certain level of agreement to the reasons behind a restructuring was admitted. The concluding remarks in its critique displayed a concern that processes were pushed too soon, seeing that evaluation processes of the University research and education were still to be completed (see Empirical Findings above).

When looking at the launch of the restructuring process of the department structure at the School, history can almost be said to repeat itself. While a working committee was indeed assigned to produce a suggestion for a new structure, the School Management Team initiated the work in the said group with an already desired outcome present on the table. It became evident that the view was not shared by the departments, and a concern that the process was initiated and acted upon before the completion of the University reorganisation process, was held forward as a great concern. Nevertheless the process of a new department structure was pushed forward despite the results of GU Förnyas not being finalised at the time; a process with possible implications in the outcomes being of great value to take into consideration when restructuring.

Why is this a point of interest in the analysis of the process as a whole? It all comes down to the concept of involvement and open mind sets already from the initiation of a process, bringing forward suggestions from the bottom up rather than the opposite (cf. Piderit, 2000). While a working committee was indeed appointed at the School, its composition, comprising

mainly heads of department and administrative coordinators, meant that the discussion in its official format in fact was limited to that of individuals in managing positions, something that according to Piderit (2000) is likely to render a less fortunate end result, in that suggestions for change, according to the author, are both best formed and realised through broad involvement within said organisations, including all levels and types of employees.

A different perspective of the past events is observed when looking at the actual carrying out of the process. The latter parts of the School process, following the vast critique from the departments affected, can indeed be considered to follow some of the advice lined out above by Robertson et al. (2009), for example in being open to alterations in suggested changes. The fact that the process in itself was initiated in the manner explained above makes one wonder what the end result would have been, had all balls simply been thrown up in the air with the sole goal of finding possible alternative ways to organise the School operations, and doing so by having a lengthy process with involvement of representative from all levels and categories of employees.

One can of course argue that success was met in that all parties finally did agree on a new suggestion. The opposing views on this final structure, displayed through the interviews conducted, do however imply that so was the case perhaps of other reasons, such as time constraints and the set goal that something needed to be done to meet the new University prerequisites. The reasoning of the likes of Robertson et al. (2009) fit the series of events displayed above in that academics on the one hand can be seen as inherently resisting change affecting their own unit, however that they on the other hand eventually simply abide to what is being put forward. Furthermore, the question of “change for the sake of whom?” arises fairly quickly. As outlined in the literature review above, to implement organisational changes that are not born from the roots up, but rather imposed in a top-down manner, are seldom successful (Piderit, 2000). As expressed by Beer & Eisenstat (2000), a top-down senior management style can end up becoming a killer of strategy implementation. One can of course argue that the process did proceed in an open fashion in that the initial suggestion was reformed and replaced prior to the completion, but the fact still remains that the overall initiation took place top-down rather than the reverse.

All in all, the route leading up to the changes made can be considered to show signs of points for reflection if similar processes are to take place in the future, both in terms of the actual initiation and in the finalising of ideas for development.

It's All in the Communication

What can be clearly observed throughout the empirical findings is the lack of coherence in reasoning between levels of the School organisation. While there is a clear standpoint from the department level that the changes carried out were a direct consequence of the University-wide process at place, the School level on the other hand, as pointed out above, claims this to have been merely a trigger for a long planned process to take place, regardless of university directives. The question is what the reason for this difference in view is? Looking at the directives for the local reorganisation process, lined out in the Background section above, no implications in either direction can be found. Seeing the clear conviction at department level that the University processes indeed were the basis for what occurred at the School, no formal denial of the same can be probable to have been put forward, this despite the fact that the School level in its own reasoning is consistent on the fact that the processes at least to a certain extent were independent of each other with regards to point of origin. From an organisational point of view this is interesting, as vertical communication is held forward as a key parameter for successful implementation of change (cf. e.g. Beer & Eisenstat, 2000). The lack thereof in the case displayed in this work is evident, and may also explain part of the difficulties in reaching broad acceptance for the chosen path, as well as a smooth implementation of the same. Likewise the comments suggest a feeling of strong hierarchical structures in the decision-making and planning of the organisation as a whole. As put forward by Tidd & Bessant (2009), to be able to create an environment that is innovative, which must indeed be considered to be one of the founding stones of an academic institution in that it engages in research, is to avoid restrictive vertical relationships and top-down dictates.

The empirical findings point at an overall opinion being that what has been done is not anchored in the organisation as a whole. The interviews show a lack of confidence in higher instances within the organisation, regardless of what level is being approached. What is meant with this is that the department level expresses scepticism towards the means behind the processes carried out at School level, while as the representatives at the School level claim their changes to be well thought through and for the best of the organisation. Likewise scepticism is pointed upwards from the School level as to whether the changes initiated by the University level really were of that great importance, or even for the best of the organisation

as a whole. The views expressed by Piderit (2000) with regards to openness in the organisation and the effective communication between all levels put up for change are yet again applicable as contrasting points of view of what is witnessed in the case of the School as displayed in the empirical findings, meaning that communication cannot have been optimal. A different way to approach the observed could be that put forward by Robertson et al. (2009), in that what was expressed at the different levels of organisation in fact also could be interpreted as a way to find faulty points as to hinder change all in all. Taking this standpoint, the ideas brought forward by Frølich (2005) with regards to the lack of confidence in NPM and the assumed hierarchical structures it advocates in favour of autonomy for units within academia as to secure the individualistic approach for researchers falls as a natural continuation of the same reasoning, however rendering it an additional dimension for analysis in trying to understand how to handle similar situations in the future.

Where Did We End Up?

A Changed Academy?

As the empirical findings display, the general opinion from an academic point of view, that is, with regards to research activities, is that no greater changes have been noticed, neither for the better nor for the worse, as a result of the changes made. With regards to this, it needs to be borne in mind that the changes made lay so closely in time, meaning that full effects are yet hard to detect, as the process of research and rendering of results is a lengthy process. Nevertheless, the fact that a majority of the interviewed express doubts about noticeable positive changes to research as an effect of the reorganisation as such does mean that parts of the goals for the process are likely to not be achieved. The question is then whether this is considered a problem or not, or whether other goals, such as cost cuts for administrative functions in fact were the main focus, albeit not fully held forward as such along the way.

While the results in one way can be considered as reassuring in that operations seem to continue as normal and not turn worse, what needs to be put in focus here is that of the construction of a new department within the School, namely the Department of Economy and Society. The fact that the solution sprung a new unit of multidisciplinary character is interesting when looking into current trends regarding suggested trends for the future as how to further develop academia. Here multidisciplinary solutions are held forward as the next step to take as to spur new fields of research and alternative ways of approaching the challenges for the future (Deiaco et al. 2012). The School could therefore be considered to

have acquired a unit of the type held to be the way forward. The empirical analysis of this work does however show that while the surface may come across as multidisciplinary, the actual activities within it are in fact the same as pre restructuring. To achieve its full potential, measures in the direction of joint research projects and education ought therefore be promoted. As argued by Mosey et al. (2012), the way to make interdisciplinary constellations last is to also involve them in more traditional academic activities such as education. The interviews also gave proof that such will was present within the Department of Economy and Society, a joint master programme being proposed to the School management for consideration. Possibilities for further development of what at the moment may come across as weak department links can therefore indeed be considered as present.

A factor already discussed with regards to the process itself is that of communication. A slightly different take on the same topic is indeed of interest in the analysis of the actual outcome of what happened. As was made evident through the empirical part of this work, the fact that the Department of Economy and Society is yet to move to geographically co-located premises has been put forward as a great obstacle in succeeding with the integration of the new unit, as everyday communication is limited between the different units involved. The issue can further be connected to the thoughts of Piderit (2000) with regards to planning and clear structure of how all parts are to be carried out as a prerequisite for successful implementation of organisational change, as well as the openness to change set plans as a response to the occurrence of not beforehand considered obstacles to desired changes, in this case perhaps by postponing the actual change in the await of all practical details falling into place.

Was it All About the Administration?

From an administrative point of view the changes have however been extensive, partly due to the local reorganisation but also as a consequence of the restructuring of levels of responsibility imposed by the University. While the purpose all throughout has been to increase the quality of the overall operations of the University, the effects at least initially mainly affect the administrative staff. Several interviewees who held administrative positions witnessed of an increased workload as a consequence of the restructuring, as well as insecurity in how things were to be carried out due to the new processes not being fully set, this despite the full implementation of the new structure both at the University and School level being set at January 1, 2013. The thoughts of George (2007) can be applied here, in that the means to create a more efficient organisation as a whole might have imposed negative

effects for certain stakeholders, at least in the short run. A full analysis of all levels might therefore have been recommendable.

Likewise, the next to obsession around an as efficient as possible administration as to cut costs to free more resources to research and education is interesting from an organisational point of view. There seems to have been a need present for defending the changes made from an academic point of view, in that positive effects for the academic activities were always brought up as key reasons for initiating change. The question to be posed is therefore why there seems to be a common notion that research and educational activities need always to be put at the front, even when the issues discussed in fact evolve around something else, in this case namely that of administrative routines. A potential outcome of this obsession could be that of processes being overly complicated as people are fooled into believing that they in fact are dealing with something else. Likewise, the setting of people discussing the changes suggested might be deceptive in that academics are appointed to discuss what in fact could be seen as administrative measures. Yet again the thoughts of Piderit (2000) and Robertson et al. (2009) with regards to the construction of working committees and the involvement of members of staff in all processes are applicable.

As argued by Shattock (2003), a strong academic institution also requires good infrastructure and administration, however, at the same time administration is oftentimes only seen as a cost as opposed to a prerequisite for good end results in research and education. A potential risk of a majority of the effects of a greater reorganisation with an official standpoint that all changes are for the greater good of the output from the unit as a whole, but where focus in fact is mainly put on the administrative part, may be that the centre of attention ends up at the short-sighted desire to free more resources of the total budget to research and education purposes, neglecting potential future effects rendered from a too slimmed down administration. If a majority of the individuals appointed to the working committees, as well as the decision-making instances, in fact are representatives of the academic side of the organisational operations, a bias in the reasoning around future structures is likely to occur.

Conclusion

The following section brings up main conclusions that can be drawn from the study, based on three main areas, namely:

1. The process in general
2. The academic point of view, both in terms of process and outcomes
3. The administrative point of view, both in terms of process and outcomes

The Process

When looking at the process as such, it is evident that extensive anchoring processes seem to have been present at all steps of the way towards reorganisation of the School. However, the fact that set suggestions for future changes were presented already initially to the working committees dealing with the matters, as opposed to a blank paper with the single guideline of changes needed to be made to adhere to the new premises as posed by the University, shows that desires and preferred results were already present. Likewise the working committee appointed to produce a final suggestion for decision took a fairly traditional form of mainly representatives from managing positions, with academic staff being overrepresented in relation to administrative staff, all in contradiction to the more open processes with as broad representation as possible put forward in previous research on the topic (Piderit, 2000; Robertson et al., 2009). A possible outcome of this could be an end result pushed in a not necessarily logic direction due to said conditions. Future processes may benefit from reflecting upon both parameters outlined above, both for anchoring and outcome reasons. A natural effect of such changes would also be that of increased vertical communication within the organisation, as well as a natural arena for the springing of ideas bottom-up as opposed to top-bottom, two parameters proven to be of highest importance for successful implementation of organisational change (cf. Beer & Eisenstat, 2000; Piderit, 2000; Robertson et al., 2009).

The Academy

The case of the School analysed in this study proves the difficulties in implementing organisational change within academia. General scepticism towards the intentions of the hierarchical structure within both the University and the School prove the point of a desire for autonomy of the own unit, as well as the difficulty in imposing a more professional organisation along the lines of NPM in said environments (Frølich, 2005; Robertson et al., 2009). A first implication given by the study is therefore that matters of this sort need to be taken seriously all throughout the process towards change, admitting that convincing the parties involved may take longer time than expected or desired. Likewise, arguments along

the lines of the importance of individualism for the single researcher and the autonomy of separate units needs to be made natural parts of the argumentation towards any type of change, regardless the goal, but especially in processes where the desire is to move rather in the opposite direction, as the case of NPM.

Another important finding with regards to the academic side is that of the implementation of new units. As expressed in the analysis, previous research shows that for multidisciplinary units to become successful, traditional work assignments such as teaching are important factors, or the collaboration risks fading (Mosey et al., 2012). The School is here posed with two challenges. First of all the empirical study shows that an integration of the different units now comprising the Department of Economy and Society has been slow, partly due to infrastructural reasons in that the units are still spread out geographically, but also due to a seemingly pre-set view that the formation of the new department rather was a measure as to be able to continue operations as usual. The latter can of course be related to both the inherent reluctance to change mentioned earlier in this section, as well as the proceedings of the process as explained above. Nevertheless, if the construction is to become more than an administrative solution, focus needs to be put both on finding initial collaborations for researchers, but also joint efforts with regards to for example teaching.

To sum up, what has been observed in this case is an organisational change that per se has not given any yet detectable positive effects on research, at least not with regards to output of results. As has repeatedly been noted throughout this work, time may indeed be a factor here, meaning that full effects are highly likely not yet reached.

The Administration

An interesting observation throughout the case is that of how changes are being presented, where focus often is put on potential effects on research and education, but where the measures taken in fact deal with administrative functions. While there of course is a strong link between the two, it can be questioned whether the administration as such in fact affects the outcomes of said operations. Certain research point at the importance of strong infrastructure and good administrative routines for the success of an academic institution as an entity, but does not point at it affecting results as such. Rather it is held forward as a prerequisite for operations to be able to continue as normal (Shattock, 2003).

Furthermore, research shows that academics tend to see administration as a cost and not as a renderer of revenues, meaning that efficiency maximisation is likely to be promoted for these activities as to free more resources for research and education, as these are visible triggers for revenues, this despite that such measures may have the long-term consequence that quality of the academic institution as a whole decreases due to lack of supporting functions. What this implies is that changes of administrative character and processes regarding the same should also put more focus on those groups of employees, at least rendering an even divide between academics and administrators in the construction of working committees etcetera.

Future Research

Further studies on the topic could investigate the impact of organisational changes on output of intellectual contributions from universities, as to see whether changes of the type analysed here in fact do have positive impact on research, as has repeatedly been claimed to be one of the goals. Such attempts must however likely wait numerous years as academic output is the end result of an oftentimes lengthy process, spanning over several years, meaning that data for such analyses is yet to become available.

Furthermore, the importance of broad involvement in the process towards change is of interest to look further into, especially with regards to administrative changes, this seeing that traditional constellations in working committees etcetera are seemingly still the standard.

While research has been carried out with regards to the operations of multidisciplinary institutes, such studies seem to be based on units sprung voluntarily. The School gives an example where such constellations may occur for other reasons, such as new administrative routines. A further look into the potential for successful generation of new research fields and teaching ideas as a result of such reorganisation could therefore be of interest, as to see if also initially involuntary structural changes may bring positive results within academia.

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