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## “A WORLD-CLASS UNIVERSITY”

A legitimation analysis of five Swedish universities' information brochures in English

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# Abstract

**Title:** “A World-Class University”: A Legitimation Analysis of Five Swedish Universities’ Information Brochures in English.

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to investigate how the University of Gothenburg, Lund University, Stockholm University, Umeå University and Uppsala University – five of the biggest universities in Sweden in terms of enrollment – legitimize Swedish higher education in their information brochures in order to attract international students. The study is mainly based on Theo van Leeuwen’s theory and model (2007) of legitimation, and a legitimation analysis is conducted with the aim of finding out which legitimation strategies the five universities use to explain and justify their practices. At its core, the legitimation analysis is a qualitative text analysis which studies the linguistic features of the material. The analyzed material consists of five multimodal information brochures in English – one brochure from each university – which essentially contain information about the universities’ education and research. The results of the analysis show that the five universities primarily use the legitimization strategies *authorization*, *moral evaluation* and *rationalization*. Thus, the universities try to influence and convince prospective international students by having different types of authorities exercise their authority, by expressing specific moral values that the readers should share, and by making the purposes behind their practices appear rational and reasonable. The results are also discussed in terms of how the universities’ choice of legitimation strategies may have been affected by the social contexts in which they were produced.

**Keywords:** *text analysis, legitimation, CDA, discourse, higher education*

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## 1. Introduction

This study investigates how language can be used by higher educational institutions to legitimize their practices. The theory of legitimation, as developed by Theo van Leeuwen (2007), is about how systems of authority explain, justify and ultimately legitimize their social practices. Legitimation provides answers to the “why?” questions asked in texts, specifically “why should we do this?” and/or “why should we do it in this particular way?”. Legitimation is constructed in discourses through linguistic and visual strategies, and van Leeuwen has distinguished four forms of legitimation: *authorization*, *moral evaluation*, *rationalization* and *mythopoesis*. (More detailed descriptions of the theory of legitimation and the forms of legitimation are given below in sections 3.2. and 3.3. respectively.)

Higher educational institutions need to legitimize their practices of education and research in order to influence, persuade and attract students. In this study, I analyze information brochures in English from the five Swedish universities University of Gothenburg, Lund University, Stockholm University, Umeå University and Uppsala University to find out how they, according to van Leeuwen’s framework (2007), legitimize their practices to attract international students in particular. I found these practices and this material intriguing because relatively large numbers of international students attend Swedish universities yearly. In fact, roughly 35 000 international students attended Swedish higher education in the academic year 2015/16, and over 16 000 of them attended any of the five universities listed above (Universitetskanslersämbetet (UKÄ) [Swedish Higher Education Authority] 2016a). Just how were these international students persuaded to pursue a higher education in Sweden?

## 2. Aim and research questions

The primary aim of this study is to investigate how five of the biggest universities in Sweden – the University of Gothenburg, Lund University, Stockholm University, Umeå University and Uppsala University – legitimize their practices through the use of legitimation strategies in their information brochures in English. More specifically, the aim is to investigate how these five universities legitimize higher education in Sweden in order to attract international students.

The aim can be summarized by the following research question, which I strived to answer in my study:

- What legitimation strategies do the universities use in their information brochures to legitimize their practices, and thus Swedish higher education, in order to attract prospective international students?

### **3. Theoretical framework**

In this section, I present the theoretical framework for this study. Firstly, I touch upon the theoretical approach of critical discourse analysis (CDA), as introduced by Fairclough (1992, 2010). Secondly, I present van Leeuwen's (2007) theory of the discursive construction of legitimation and explain how it is related to CDA. Lastly, I provide a detailed description of van Leeuwen's framework and model for analyzing different legitimation strategies in discourses.

#### **3.1. Critical discourse analysis**

CDA, as introduced and developed by Fairclough (1992, 2010), is a generally accepted and widely used approach to analyzing written and spoken communication. Fairclough (2010:6) refers to CDA as a transdisciplinary approach influenced by several different disciplines, such as linguistics, sociolinguistics and pragmatics.

One of the premises of CDA is the interpretation of discourse. As a term, *discourse* has been widely debatable and has different meanings depending on the context, but Fairclough (2010:95) defines discourse as language use conceived as social practice. This can be further explained by Fairclough's model for discourse, which is made up of three interdependent dimensions.

According to Fairclough (2010:132), discourse is simultaneously seen as:

1. A language text
2. A discourse practice
3. A sociocultural practice

The innermost dimension is concerned with the linguistics features of the written or spoken text, which include the text's grammar, vocabulary, structure, etc. The middle dimension has to do with the production and interpretation of the text, which relates to questions about how, when, where, why and by whom the text was created as well as by whom the text will be read. Lastly, the outermost dimension is concerned with the social contexts that the discourse is both shaped by and helps shape, which refers to the power relations and political, cultural and ideological practices at work at different levels in a social organization.

Fairclough puts a lot of emphasis on the interrelations between the dimensions and stresses how all three dimensions are essential in order to get the whole picture of any discourse. The interdependence of the dimensions is best explained by Fairclough himself:

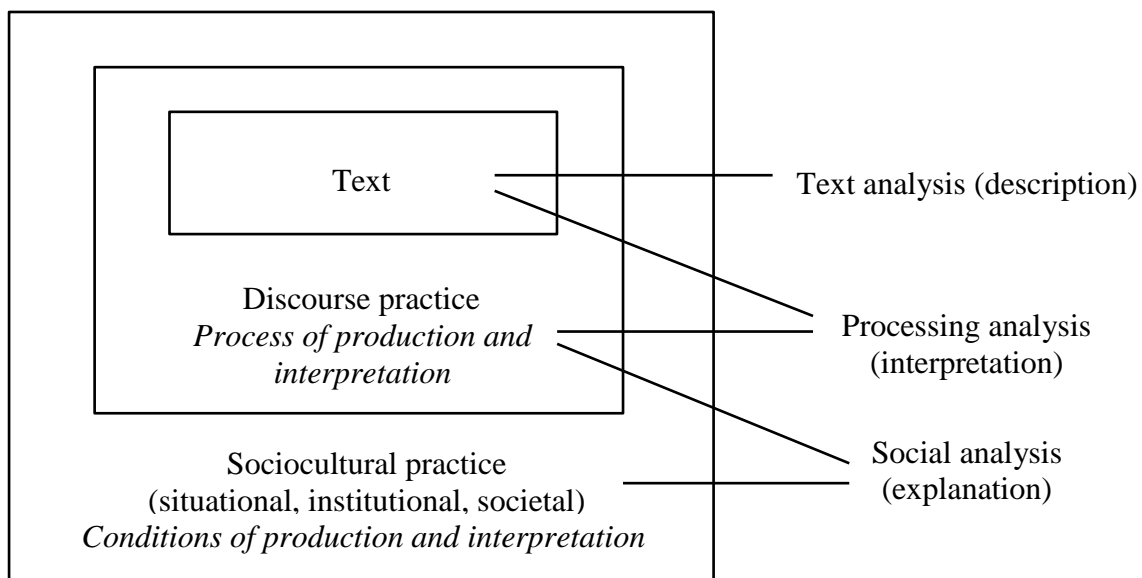
A special feature of the approach is that the link between sociocultural practice and text is mediated by discourse practice; how a text is produced or interpreted, in the sense of what discursive practices and conventions are drawn from what order(s) of discourse and how they are articulated together, depends upon the nature of the sociocultural practice which the discourse is a part of (including the relationship to existing hegemonies); the nature of the discourse practice of text production shapes the text, and leaves ‘traces’ in surface features of the text; and the nature of the discourse practice of text interpretation determines how the surface features of a text will be interpreted. (Fairclough 2010, p. 132).

A three-dimensional interpretation of discourse naturally requires a three-dimensional model for discourse analysis, as each dimension requires a different kind of analysis. Fairclough (2010:132) distinguishes between the following three analyses:

1. Text analysis
2. Processing analysis
3. Social analysis

A text analysis implies a linguistic description of the text, a processing analysis entails an interpretation of the relationship between the discourse practice and the text, and a social analysis involves an explanation of the relationship between the discourse practice and the social practice.

Figure 1 summarizes Fairclough’s three-dimensional approach:



**Figure 1.** Fairclough's three dimensions of discourse and discourse analysis. After Janks 1997, p. 330

CDA is evidently, despite its name, not just an analysis of discourse. Fairclough’s model attempts to capture the simultaneity of discourse, as it embeds three kinds of analysis, one inside the other.

Thus, CDA is meant to be a method of analyzing not only the dimensions in and of themselves, but also the connections between the features of texts, the features of discourse practices and the nature of sociocultural practices.

Furthermore, CDA is not just a descriptive analysis, it is also normative. The primary focus of CDA is on social relations. More specifically, the focus is on how society produces and perpetuates social wrongs; how power relations, politics and ideologies are part of the production; and how discourse is part of the perpetuation. In other words, CDA is typically used to analyze the relations between discourse and social practice, especially how power is established and expressed in discourse. The goal of CDA is to expose and analyze social wrongs and power relations in their discursive aspects, as well as to identify ways to right the social wrongs.

### **3.2. The construction of legitimation in discourse**

This study is mainly based upon van Leeuwen's theory (2007) of legitimation. As mentioned in the introduction, legitimation provides explicit or implicit answers to the "why?" questions posed in texts – "why should we do this?" and/or "why should we do it in this particular way?".

Van Leeuwen (2007:91-92) states that discourses construct legitimation for social practices that need to be explained and justified; more specifically, legitimation is constructed in discourses as a way for systems of authority and power to legitimize their practices. Van Leeuwen further argues that legitimation always legitimizes the practices of specific institutional orders.

In his article "Legitimation in discourse and communication" (2007) and book *Discourse & Communication* (2008), van Leeuwen sets out a descriptive framework for analyzing the construction of legitimation in discourse. The framework is based on his study of a text corpus consisting of a diverse collection of texts which legitimizes the practice of compulsory education. The framework sets the following guidelines (2007:91-92):

- Legitimation is primarily realized textually by certain linguistics strategies. Some forms of legitimation, however, can also be realized visually by multimodal strategies.
- Legitimation can also be used to delegitimize, that is, critique and oppose a social practice.
- Legitimation cannot be studied without its context.
- Legitimation can answer the "why?" questions in several different ways, as legitimation occurs in four forms. These four forms of legitimation, also referred to as legitimation strategies, are all explained in section 3.3. below.



Van Leeuwen's work is generally situated within the CDA paradigm, and his framework can be seen as a form of CDA or a tool to be used for CDA. Van Leeuwen (2007:92) argues that a decontextualized study of legitimation is impossible, which implies that he agrees with Fairclough's view that discourse should not and cannot be analyzed without its social context. Van Leeuwen's descriptive framework also focuses on exposing the strategies used to establish and express social practices in discourse. Analyzing legitimation strategies can then be treated as a way to uncover how social practices, especially power relations, can shape discourses.

A way to further slot van Leeuwen's theory into Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse is to adopt Gustafsson's (2009) standpoint that legitimation is a function in a discourse practice. As will explained further in section 4, Gustafsson (2009:41-43) argues that, because discourse practices involve the production and interpretation of the texts, legitimation is something that happens in the communication between the writer and the reader, rather than being something that is just embedded in the texts. In her study, Gustafsson treats her material as discourse practices rather than just texts, and thus implies that legitimation strategies only can be truly revealed and understood through the combination of textual, processing and social analyses.

### **3.3. Model of legitimation**

Van Leeuwen's framework (2007) comprises a model for identifying and analyzing the way legitimation is constructed in discourses.

Van Leeuwen identifies four forms of legitimation and thus his model consists of four main categories: *authorization*, *moral evaluation*, *rationalization* and *mythopoesis*. Each category also has a number of subcategories. These forms of legitimation can appear separately or in combination with each other.

Van Leeuwen's model (2007:107-108) also includes the dimension of multimodal legitimation, as some forms of legitimation can be realized visually as well as linguistically, for example through photos and illustrations. However, in order to fit the scope of this study and to make the study more focused, this analysis was limited to linguistic legitimation only, and so multimodal legitimation will not be addressed further. For those interested, more information can be found in van Leeuwen's article (2007).

In the following sections, I explain the model in its entirety and provide examples of each legitimation strategy. The examples are influenced by or taken directly from van Leeuwen's article (2007).

### 3.3.1. Authorization

*Authorization* is legitimation by reference to different types of authority. If legitimation is the answer to a “why?” question, then authorization is the “because authority X says so” type of answer. Van Leeuwen (2007:94-97) identifies three subcategories of authorization, which in turn have two types each.

The first subcategory is simply called *authority*, and the authority can be either *personal* or *impersonal*. The second subcategory is called *commendation*, which can be expressed either through *expert authority* or *role model authority*. The third and final subcategory is called *custom*, which can be realized either through the *authority of tradition* or the *authority of conformity*.

In the case of personal authority, a person has legitimatizing authority due to their status or role in a certain context. Such authorities can justify what they need others to do with a simple “because I say so.” Personal authority legitimation is usually expressed through verbal processes along with some form of obligation modality, as in example (1):

- (1) The student sat down because the teacher said she had to.

Authority legitimation can also be impersonal, as there is the impersonal authority of laws, rules and regulations. Here, the answer to the “why?” question is “because the rules say so” rather than “because I say so.” Impersonal authority legitimation also typically takes the form of verbal processes and often make use of adjectives such as ‘compulsory’ and ‘obligatory’. An example would be:

- (2) The laws state that seat belt use is compulsory.

As for expert authority, legitimacy is derived from a person’s expertise in a specific context. The expert authority can be stated explicitly, for example by providing credentials or qualifications, or implicitly, which often is the case if the expert is well-known in the given context and just the mentioning of their name is sufficient. Expert legitimation typically takes the form of verbal processes or mental processes, and thus answer the “why?” question with, for example:

- (3) The doctor says to drink lots of fluids.
- (4) The professor thinks the theory is plausible.

In the case of role model authority, role models and opinion leaders have legitimizing authority just because they adopt a certain behavior, endorse certain opinions or believe certain things. This can apply to members of a particular peer group as well as celebrities. The role model authority sometimes requires further justification in the form of positive descriptions, such as in examples (5) and (6):

- (5) Experienced teachers know how to motivate their students.
- (6) The generous celebrity donates millions of dollars to charity.

The authority of tradition is legitimizing due to people's sense of tradition. The answer to the "why?" question is something along the lines of "because this is what we always have done," and no further justification is needed. The authority of tradition is usually expressed through keywords like 'custom', 'practice' and 'habit'. An example would be:

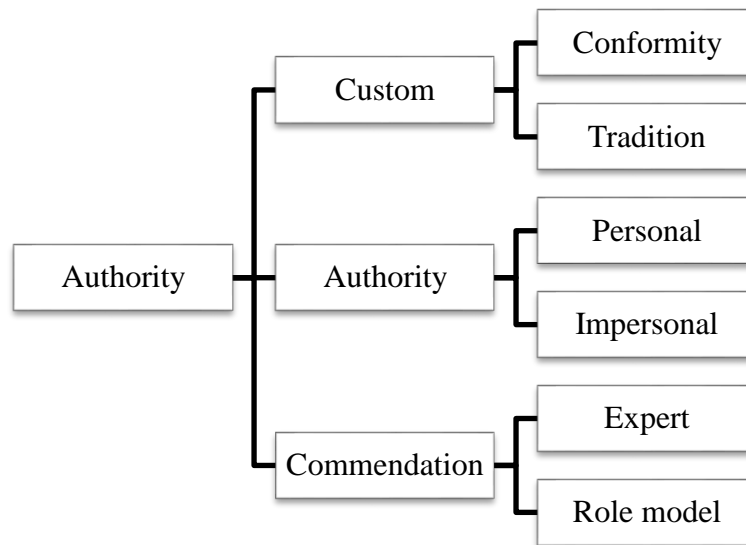
- (7) We have always had a custom of taking off our shoes at the door.

Lastly, the authority of conformity is legitimizing due to the implicit messages "everybody else is doing it, and so should you" or "most people are doing it, and so should you", which also provide the answer to the "why?" question. Conformity legitimation is typically realized through high frequency modality, but sometimes it is realized in the form of an explicit comparison. Van Leeuwen does not explain exactly what he means by high frequency modality, as he does not go into detail on the matter. Going by the explanation and examples of the legitimation strategy provided in his article (2007), I believe it refers to words and phrases that indicate a large quantity, or in this case, a large number of people. As conformity legitimation is about fitting in with people, I take it to mean that the strategy can be expressed through quantifiers such as 'all', 'the majority', 'most', 'many', 'a lot' and the like.

Example (8) demonstrates high frequency modality, while example (9) demonstrates an explicit comparison.

- (8) The majority of the students studied for the exam.
- (9) She chose to study at the University of Gothenburg, just like her mother had done.

Figure 2 summarizes the subcategories and types of authorization:



*Figure 2.* Van Leeuwen’s types of authority legitimation.

### 3.3.2. Moral evaluation

*Moral evaluation* is legitimation based on moral values and is most often linked to specific discourses of moral value. These discourses are made implicit and are only hinted at by the use of evaluative adjectives, such as “normal” and “natural”. Van Leeuwen then refers to these adjectives as “the tip of a submerged iceberg of moral values” (2007:97). Seeing as these discourses are implicit, finding an explicit, linguistic method for identifying moral evaluation legitimation is problematic. The legitimations can merely be ‘recognized’, on the basis of one’s common-sense cultural knowledge.

Van Leeuwen (2007:97-100) distinguishes between three different types of moral evaluation legitimation: *evaluation*, *abstraction* and *analogies*. In the case of legitimation through evaluation, evaluative adjectives play a key role, as mentioned above. It is important to acknowledge that certain adjectives can be problematic, as they can express concrete qualities about actions or objects as well as commend the same actions or objects. It can therefore be difficult to distinguish between the natural order and the moral order, but van Leeuwen explains that a moral order, unlike a natural order, can be changed by human intervention.

While evaluation can be asserted simply through adjectives like “good” and “bad”, van Leeuwen focuses on adjectives such as “normal”, “natural”, “healthy” and “useful”, as they were commonly used in an evaluative manner in his material. An example would therefore be:

- (10) It is perfectly normal to feel nervous about starting university.

Abstraction is another method of expressing moral evaluation. Abstraction is about referring to practices in abstract ways and linking them to discourses of moral values, which ‘moralizes’ and therefore legitimizes the practices by highlighting a certain desirable quality. As van Leeuwen puts it (2007:99), instead of saying “the child goes to school for the first time”, we might say “the child gains independence”, which legitimizes the practice of school in terms of a discourse of independence. Similarly, in example (11), the practice of group projects is legitimized in terms of a discourse of collaboration, where the highlighted desirable quality is being able to work well with others.

- (11) By partaking in group projects, the students improve their ability to collaborate with others.

Another way of expressing moral evaluation is by using analogies, as comparisons in discourse typically have a legitimizing or delegitimizing function. When using analogies, the answer to the “why?” question would be “because it is like another activity which is associated with positive moral values.” Analogies are naturally very context-based, as an activity can be associated with either positive or negative values depending on the given context.

The comparison that comes with analogies can be expressed explicitly or implicitly. Explicit comparison can be expressed through similarity conjunctions or circumstances of comparison, as in example (12):

- (12) Referencing will become as automatic as brushing your teeth if you practice it often enough.

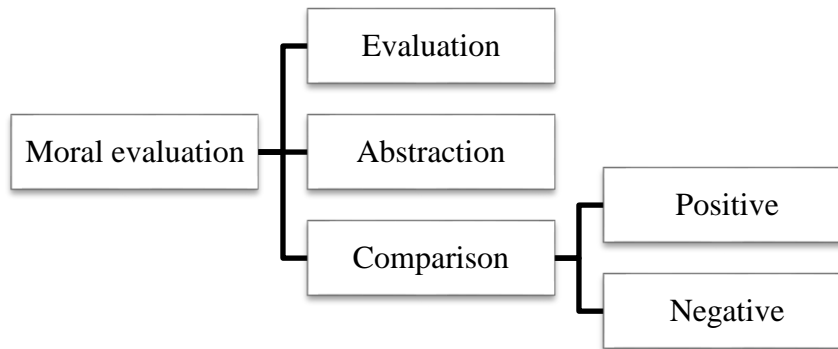
Furthermore, van Leeuwen explains implicit comparison in the following way:

An activity that belongs to one social practice is described by a term which, literally, refers to an activity belonging to another social practice, and the positive or negative values which, in the given sociocultural context, are attached to that other activity are then transferred to the original activity. (van Leeuwen, p. 99).

Example (13) would be an instance of implicit comparison, where the positive value and happy feeling of scoring a goal in say, a football match, is transferred to the practice of passing an exam.

- (13) Passing the exam felt like scoring a goal.

Figure 3 summarizes the types of moral evaluation:



**Figure 3.** Van Leeuwen’s types of moral evaluation legitimation.

### **3.3.3. Rationalization**

*Rationalization* is legitimation based on making practices appear rational; that is, as sensible, logical or an indisputable truth. Rationalization and moralization are closely linked. The morality is mostly concealed and indirect, but no rationalization can function as legitimation without it. Van Leeuwen (2007:100-105) distinguishes between two subcategories of rationalization, *instrumental* and *theoretical*, and each subcategory has three types each.

In the case of instrumental rationalization, practices are legitimized by reference to their goals, uses and effects. Instrumental rationalization is based on moralized purposes. Purposes, much like legitimations, are constructed in discourse to explain why social practices exist. Purposes can serve as legitimations if they contain an element of moralization, that is, if they are linked to a discourse of moral values by a highlighted desirable quality. Compare example (14) and (15), as given by van Leeuwen (2007:101):

- (14) The reception teachers went to the nursery unit to see their prospective pupils.
- (15) The following strategies were employed to make the introduction to PE more smooth.

Both examples contain a purpose, but only example (15) can be considered a legitimation through instrumental rationalization, because unlike example (14) it contains an evaluative adjective, “smooth”, which links it to a discourse of moral values and therefore ‘moralizes’ it.

On this basis, van Leeuwen states that instrumental rationalization can be of three types: *goal-oriented*, *means-oriented* or *effect-oriented*. In the case of goal orientation, practices are rationalized by being ascribed motives, aims, intentions, goals and so forth. Practices are

explained with the formula “I do x in order to do, be or have y.” As for means orientation, practices are rationalized as means to reach a higher goal. The rationalizing formula would then be “I achieve doing, being or having y by x-ing” or “X-ing serves to achieve being, doing or having y.” Lastly, effect orientation emphasizes the outcome and effect of a practice. The purposefulness is something that only existed in hindsight, which means that practices are rationalized by focusing on the effects of the results of an already accomplished practice. Below are examples of each of the three types of instrumental rationalization, in the order they are presented above:

- (16) She studied hard in order to become the top student in her class.
- (17) He will get into his first-choice university by studying hard and improving his grades.
- (18) She has to move out of her parents’ house so that she can gain independence.

As for theoretical rationalization, legitimation is founded on some kind of truth, rather than on purpose. Practices are legitimized by reference to a natural order of things, to ‘the way things are.’ Theoretical rationalization can be of three types – *definition*, *explanation* or *prediction* – all of which provide explicit representations of truths of the natural order of things. A definition is, according to van Leeuwen (2007:104), when a practice is defined and characterized in terms of another, moralized practice. Both practices need to be generalized and their link must be either attributive (e.g. ‘is’) or significative (e.g. ‘means’). An example, as provided by van Leeuwen (2007:104):

- (19) Transition is a necessary stage in the young child’s experience.

In the case of an explanation, the actors in the practice are defined and characterized instead. Explanations describe general attributes and activities of the actors in question, so that the answer to the “why?” question would be “because doing things this way is appropriate for these actors.” An explanation could look like example (20):

- (20) The factory workers always eat lunch at noon because it is part of their daily schedule.

Lastly, a prediction is based on expertise and experience, and can be proven wrong by contrary experience. An example would be:

- (21) Don't worry if you feel nervous about starting university for the first time – it will pass soon enough.

Van Leeuwen also discusses two other types of rationalization, namely experiential and scientific rationalization. However, as these types are not relevant for my study, I will not address them. For those interested, further information is available in van Leeuwen's article (2007).

Figure 4 summarizes the subcategories and types of rationalization:

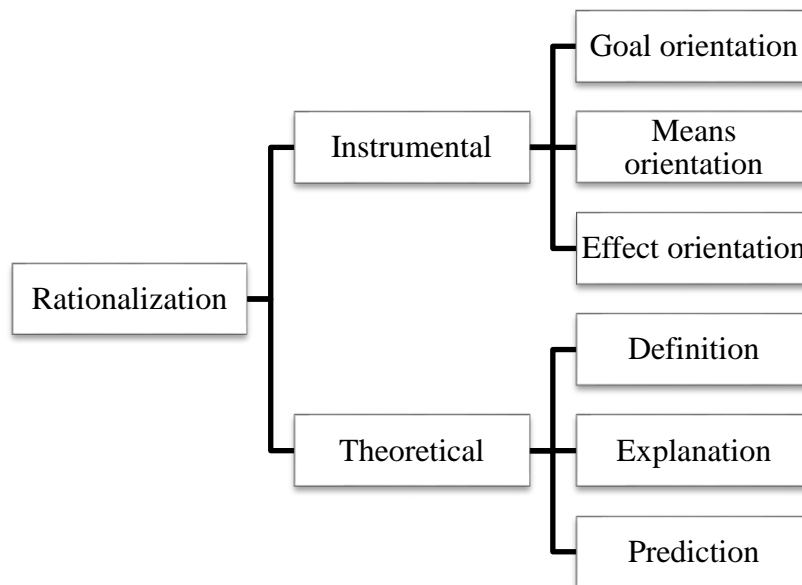


Figure 4. Van Leeuwen's types of rationalization legitimation.

### 3.3.4. Mythopoesis

*Mythopoesis* is legitimation achieved through the creation and telling of stories. According to van Leeuwen (2007:105-107), there are two types of mythopoesis: *moral tales* and *cautionary tales*. Moral tales will encourage one to engage in legitimate practices and uphold legitimate orders by claiming that one will be rewarded for it. On the contrary, cautionary tales convey the negative consequences that will follow if one performs non-legitimate actions and does not conform to the norms of certain legitimate practices.

Van Leeuwen further explains and gives examples of mythopoesis, but as no instances of this legitimation strategy occurred in my material, I will not go into more detail in order to keep the present study more focused. For those interested, further information can be found in van Leeuwen's article (2007).



## 4. Previous research

Previous research on the construction of legitimation in discourses is at this time limited, as few studies have been conducted on the topic. The studies presented in this section have all been conducted by Swedish researchers who have studied material in Swedish. They have all applied van Leeuwen's model of legitimation (2007), but they have studied quite different types of discourses.

Gustafsson (2009) studies Swedish political pamphlets published in 1769 and 1809–1810 to find out how the people, actions and arguments are legitimized or delegitimized. The aim of her study is thus primarily to analyze how discursive strategies for legitimation and delegitimation are realized linguistically in the political pamphlets. Gustafsson draws inspiration from CDA specifically from Fairclough's (1992, 2010) model of discourse, and treats her material not just as texts, but as discourse practices. This is to emphasize the mutually formative relationship between texts and social contexts, as she takes the standpoint that texts need to be analyzed together with their contexts. She analyzes her material by applying van Leeuwen's categories of legitimation and finds that all four forms of legitimation occur, though the legitimation is used in different ways in the two time periods. Gustafsson discusses why this difference is, and attributes it to contextual factors, especially to how the political situation differed between the time periods and thus affected the conditions for the production and interpretation of the pamphlets.

Sandberg (2013) studies Swedish information brochures about elderly care in the municipality of Kungälv. In her study, she aims to find out which legitimation strategies the Kungälv authorities use to legitimize their elderly care, and also what picture the legitimation strategies construct of the elderly as a group. Much like Gustafsson (2009), Sandberg bases her analysis on the supposition that texts and contexts are united and mutually influenced by each other. On this basis, she applies van Leeuwen's model of legitimation to her material and analyses both linguistic and visual forms of legitimation. Sandberg finds that the linguistic legitimation is mainly expressed through moral evaluation and instrumental rationalization, and that the visual legitimation is mainly expressed in the form of moral evaluation. She also finds that these legitimation strategies construct a picture of the elderly as ethnically Swedish, relatively wealthy, healthy and independent.

Helgesson (2014) takes a slightly different approach as she studies Swedish brochures about waste sorting as published by different municipalities in Sweden. She views legitimation strategies as not only a way to legitimize a practice, but also a way to construct certain roles for the reader in texts. In other words, she claims that certain legitimation strategies implicate certain

readers. Helgesson's aim is to determine which roles the legitimation strategies construct for the readers in her material, so naturally she conducts a legitimation analysis using van Leeuwen's model. Her analysis shows that legitimation occurs in the forms of authorization, moral evaluation and rationalization. Helgesson also distinguishes three reader roles constructed by these legitimation strategies: an obedient citizen, an environmentally conscious citizen and a citizen as either a business partner or an economical housewife.<sup>1</sup>

## **5. Material**

The material consists of five brochures in English from five different universities in Sweden: The University of Gothenburg, Lund University, Stockholm University, Umeå University and Uppsala University.

The five brochures have been produced by their respective universities' communication departments. The brochures primarily contain information about their respective universities, and while the content varies slightly between the brochures, all five of them contain information about the universities' education and research. I provide more detailed individual information about the brochures' format and content further below in this section.

The brochures aim to promote the universities and to inform, interest and attract prospective students. Seeing as all five universities have a Swedish version of the same brochure or similar brochures in Swedish, it is assumed that these brochures in English are primarily aimed at international students and students who do not have Swedish as their first language.

The brochures are between 8-16 pages including front pages and 1500-3500 words long. They are all multimodal with an even distribution between texts and images. All five brochures contain numerous images, most of which are photos. The photos primarily depict people who presumably are students, teachers and researchers at the universities. The depicted people are of varying ages, genders and ethnicities. Some of the photos depict the universities' environments, such as buildings and campuses, as well as the different cities that the universities are located in. The brochures will be presented in alphabetical order by city names below.

The University of Gothenburg's brochure was published in 2015. It is ten pages long with around 1700 words and 25 images. Apart from information about the university's education and research, the brochure also contains information about the university's history and collaborations, as well as information about Gothenburg as a city.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information about these roles and what they imply, see Helgesson (2014).

The brochure from Lund University is approximately 3100 words long, and the text is spread over 16 pages and accompanied by 35 images. It comprises information about the university's history and collaborations, Lund as a city, Sweden as a country and the university in figures. The brochure was published in 2017.

Stockholm University's brochure was published in 2014. It is 13 pages long and has about 3100 words and 22 images. The brochure focuses on the university's research and collaborations with industry and society, but it also includes some facts and figures about the university, as well as some information about Stockholm as a city.

The brochure from Umeå University is eight pages long and consist of roughly 1500 words and 6 images. The brochure was published in 2016 and encompasses information about the university's history, campuses and the university in figures.

Uppsala University's brochure is 14 pages long with about 3500 words and 22 images. The brochure contains information about the university's history, collaborations and different faculties, and also covers information about Uppsala as a city and the city's culture. It was published in 2014.

All five brochures are available as digital versions on their respective universities' websites, and they can be read online as well as be downloaded as PDFs. Links to the digital versions of the brochures will be given under the section Primary material.

Brochures from these universities were chosen based on statistics from UKÄ. According to UKÄ (2016b), the University of Gothenburg, Lund University, Stockholm University, Umeå University and Uppsala University are five of the biggest universities in Sweden in terms of enrollment. In 2016, these five universities had the largest numbers of registered undergraduate and graduate students of all the universities in Sweden. Furthermore, these five universities also attract thousands of international students. In the academic year 2015/16, these five universities had some of the largest numbers of registered international students, and together they had over 16 000 international students registered (UKÄ 2016a). Based on these statistics, I believe that these five universities represent and create a general overview of higher education in Sweden.

## **6. Method**

In order to reach the research aim of this study, I analyzed the material using van Leeuwen's (2007) model of legitimation. While I principally conducted a legitimation analysis, I also drew inspiration from Fairclough's (1992, 2010) model of CDA. Specifically, I treated my material not just as texts, but as discourse practices, which means that I based my analysis on the assumption that texts and contexts are closely linked and mutually shape each other. In other

words, I conducted a qualitative text analysis of my material's linguistic features while also taking the social contexts that affect my material into consideration to fully discover and comprehend the construction of the legitimation.

Van Leeuwen's model was applied in order to identify which forms of legitimation the five universities use in their information brochures. By identifying the legitimation strategies, the following "why?" question was answered: "why should someone study at a university in Sweden as an international student?".

As explained earlier in section 3.3., van Leeuwen distinguishes between four main categories of legitimation: authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization and mythopoesis. All four main categories were applied in this analysis along with their subcategories, although only three of the main categories proved to occur in the material. The analysis was limited to linguistic legitimation, which means that only linguistic elements in the material were analyzed.

In the case of authorization, I wanted to determine if any kind of authority figure exercised their authority, if there occurred any personal or impersonal authority, or if any authority of tradition or conformity was expressed in the material. As for moral evaluation, I strived to discover if the universities used evaluative adjectives, abstractions or analogies to express their moral values. Concerning rationalization, I investigated if the universities legitimized their practices by referring to the practices' goals, uses and effects, or by referring to some kind of truth. Regarding mythopoesis, I analyzed if the universities legitimized their practices through storytelling, that is, if the material contained any moral or cautionary tales.

While van Leeuwen's model is originally intended to analyze the legitimation of institutional orders and mandatory practices, such as compulsory education, for this study it was used to analyze the legitimation of a voluntary practice, namely higher education. Although higher education is voluntary, it is an obvious choice and even a necessity for many. For example, in Sweden it is seemingly a relatively common practice, as roughly 404 600 persons applied to higher educational institutions in Sweden for the autumn term 2016 (Universitets- och högskolerådet [Swedish Council for Higher Education] 2016).

Nonetheless, the universities in Sweden still need to legitimize their practices and convince people that pursuing a higher education is the right choice for them. The legitimation in their information brochures is especially crucial when attracting international students, seeing as they not only have to convince the students that they should pursue a higher education, but they also have to convince them to study in Sweden specifically. Therefore, van Leeuwen's model was the appropriate method for analyzing the material in question.

## 7. Results and analysis

In this section, I present the results of my legitimation analysis. The results are divided into three of the four main categories of legitimation, namely authorization, moral evaluation and rationalization, seeing as no instances of mythopoesis were found in the material.

As legitimation strategies can occur both individually and in combination with each other, I encountered some combinations of different strategies in my analysis. In these combination cases, I have considered one of the legitimation strategies as primary and the rest as secondary.

### 7.1. Authorization

The results show that the University of Gothenburg, Lund University, Stockholm University, Umeå University and Uppsala University legitimize their practices of education and research through authorization. The five universities primarily use expert authority and authority of tradition and conformity, as there is only one instance each of role model authority and impersonal authority. The universities seemingly do not use personal authority, as no person with context-based status exercise their authority.

In the case of expert authority, the role of the expert is filled by international ranking lists, or rather the people behind them. The universities' education is legitimized by reference to an expert's opinion of them, i.e. their rank in an international ranking list. The answer to the "why should I study at a university in Sweden?" question would be "because these experts commend these universities." An example can be found in Umeå University's brochure on page 7:

- (22) Umeå Institute of Design has been ranked as the best design school in Europe and the world by Red Dot and iF, two of the most acclaimed international design awards.

Umeå University refers to their ranking as the best design school as a way to legitimize their education. Their ranking has been decided by the experts Design Zentrum<sup>2</sup> and iF International Forum Design<sup>3</sup>, the organizations behind the design awards Red Dot and iF. The organizations' expertise is further justified by the mention of the awards' status as internationally acclaimed. This strategy should convince the readers of the quality of the university's education.

Umeå University's brochure has another example of expert authority on page 3:

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<sup>2</sup> Information retrieved from Design Zentrum's website (2017-04-25): <http://en.red-dot.org/red-dot-award.html>

<sup>3</sup> Information retrieved from International Forum Design's website (2017-04-25): <http://ifworlddesignguide.com/student-awards-overview/>

- (23) Umeå University achieved a top-ranking in Europe for international student satisfaction in 2015. It's also the fifth consecutive year it had the highest overall ranking in Sweden (Source: International Student Barometer).

Once again, Umeå University legitimizes their education by referring to their top-ranking, as decided by the experts at I-Graduate<sup>4</sup>, the company behind the survey International Student Barometer. I actually consider example (23) a combination of expert authority and authority of tradition, as Umeå University points out that they have received a top-ranking for the fifth year in a row. However, considering it is only five years, van Leeuwen (2007) would probably classify it as a habit rather than a tradition. The reference to this habit is most likely intended to further convince the readers that Umeå University offers good education and that they have been doing so for several years now.

Lund University, Stockholm University and Uppsala University also use expert authority in their brochures, on pages 1, 3 and 4 respectively:

- (24) Lund University is regularly ranked as one of the world's top 100 higher education institutions.
- (25) Today we [Stockholm University] are among the top one hundred universities in the world, according to a number of prestigious international ranking lists.
- (26) We [Uppsala University] are ranked among the top 100 universities in the world [...].

All three universities claim that they have been ranked among the top 100 universities in the world, which should indicate their practices' quality. However, I find these examples somewhat problematic, as none of the universities provide a source. They do not clarify by which expert they have been ranked, so the readers are not given a chance to determine for themselves if the expertise is justified or not. It may be the case that the readers accept this expert authority without an explicit reference to the expert in question, but I believe that the legitimation would be more convincing if the readers knew who the expert was.

Also, example (24) is another combination case, as it contains an indication of a tradition, or rather a habit like in example (23). Lund University state that they are regularly top-ranked,

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<sup>4</sup> Information retrieved from I-Graduate's website (2017-04-25): <https://www.i-graduate.org/services/international-student-barometer/>

indicating that they have conducted high-quality education long enough for them to be top-ranked not just once, but several times.

As for authority of tradition, the University of Gothenburg legitimize the way they conduct their education and research by referring to their history and tradition, as seen in example (27):

- (27) The University of Gothenburg's research and education have been permeated by social engagement and openness to society since the very beginning, and these virtues are as noticeable today as ever.

In the example, from page 19 of the brochure, the university justifies their social engagement and openness to society by stating that it is the way they have been conducting their practices since the beginning, which refers to the institution's founding in 1864.

The other universities also legitimize their practices by bringing up the history and founding of the universities. Consider the following examples, all of which are from page 1 of the respective universities' brochures:

- (28) Founded in 1477, Uppsala is Sweden's first university. As such we have a long history and rich traditions.
- (29) Lund University was founded in 1666 and, ever since, has been a centre of culture and learning.
- (30) For more than half a century, Umeå University has been evolving as the premier destination of higher education in northern Sweden. Throughout our proud history, we have remained committed to providing a world-class teaching and research environment that is characterized by excellence, innovation, openness and diversity.

They may not follow the criteria set by van Leeuwen (2007), as the examples do not really answer the aforementioned "why?" question with something along the lines of "because this is what we have always done". Rather, in these cases, I interpret long history as synonymous with experience and knowledge. This interpretation is backed by Gustafsson (2009:113), who also encountered what she calls "the authority of experience" [my translation] in her study. Because of how long the universities have been conducting education and research, they have had time to develop and improve their practices to the level of world-class quality they claim to be at today. This strategy should influence the readers to choose a well-established university rather

than a newly founded institution. Example (30) also contains legitimation through moral evaluation, so the example will appear in section 7.2. as well.

The five universities also legitimize their practices through authority of conformity. However, rather than legitimizing through the use of high frequency phrases and words, the universities most often refer to statistics. The answer to the “why should I study at a Swedish university?” question would not explicitly be “because most people are doing it”, but “because this many people are doing it.” All five brochures include information about how many students attend the universities yearly, which range between 39 000 and 70 000. Considering that these are relatively large numbers of people, I believe that this is meant to work the same way as high frequency phrases and words, as it should make the reader want to join and fit in with the masses. Example (31) can be found in Stockholm University’s brochure on page 3:

- (31) With more than 70,000 students, 1,800 PhD students and 5,000 members of staff, Stockholm University is the biggest university in Sweden.

Also, while it is a rare instance, a more typical example of authority of conformity appears in Lund University’s brochure. The university uses the high frequency word ‘most’ by claiming that they are the most popular choice for international students, thus implying that “most people are doing it”. Example (32) is from page 4:

- (32) Lund University is consistently the most popular choice for international students coming to study in Sweden.

The material also contains more instances of combined legitimation strategies, as two of the universities combine the authorities of tradition and conformity. Example (33) is from page 6 in Uppsala University’s brochure and example (34) is from page 3 in Umeå University’s brochure:

- (33) Each year Uppsala University attracts thousands of highly motivated students from Sweden and across the world.
- (34) Every year, we [Umeå University] host around 2,000 international students, teachers and researchers.

In the examples, both universities legitimize their practice of attracting and hosting national and international students by stating that it is something that they do each/every year. In other words, it is a tradition, albeit a rather obvious one. The universities also point out that they



attract and host relatively large numbers of students, with Uppsala University being less specific, as to express authority of conformity.

While role model authority seemingly is not the five universities' preferred legitimation strategy, Stockholm University uses what I believe is a form of role model authority, as they legitimize their practices by referring to their famous and successful alumni. Consider example (35) from page 7 in the brochure:

- (35) Since the founding of Stockholm University, many successful writers, journalists, business leaders, politicians and other distinguished personalities have studied here in order to carve out a future career. These include Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, County Police Commissioner Carin Götblad, author Jonas Hassen Khemiri, business leader Olof Faxander, journalist Alexandra Pascalidou, party spokesperson Åsa Romson, and many others.

These former students of the university can be regarded as people to look up to, as they have succeeded in one field or another. The former students do not commend Stockholm University's education themselves, but just the mention of their names and occupations can inspire the readers to follow their example and attend university.

Furthermore, a rare instance of impersonal authority can be found on page 3 in the University of Gothenburg's brochure, where they refer to the university's regulations:

- (36) Research that makes a difference, education that breaks new ground, cooperation that sparks progress and a work environment that inspires. – From the University of Gothenburg's steering document Vision 2020.

The university strives to conduct practices that make a difference and break new ground, and the reason they are striving to reach this goal is because it presumably has been decided by the university board. The steering document Vision 2020 thus includes guidelines and strategies which the university is meant to follow.<sup>5</sup> The legitimation lies in that the reference to the steering document should convince readers that the university have regulations regarding their practices which should ensure high quality.

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<sup>5</sup> Information retrieved from University of Gothenburg's website (2017-04-25): <http://www.gu.se/omuniversitetet/vision>

## 7.2. Moral evaluation

The results show that the five universities use moral evaluation as a strategy to legitimize their practices. The legitimation primarily occurs through evaluation, as the universities consistently use evaluative words in their brochures to describe their education and research. There are seemingly few instances of abstraction and only one instance of analogies.

The most common type of evaluative adjective is the one used to describe the quality of the universities' practices. As mentioned in section 7.1., several of the universities refer to their practices as *top-ranked*, and other versions of this evaluation include *best*, *excellent*, *first-rate*, *leading*, *outstanding* and *world-class*. The readers need to be convinced that the universities are conducting their practices at the highest level of quality and that attending any of these universities is worthwhile, and thus the positive evaluation is meant to make the universities appear in the best possible light. Just one of the many examples of this type of evaluative adjectives can be found in Uppsala University's brochure on page 5:

- (37) Uppsala University – world-class research and first-rate education of global use to society, business and culture.

The universities also use evaluative adjectives to legitimize certain activities in their practices. For example, both Stockholm University and Lund university claim that it is *important* for their education and research to be linked, as this link is essential for the quality of the education. See examples from pages 7 and 4 respectively in the universities' brochures:

- (38) The strong link between research and teaching is an important condition for the quality of education at Stockholm University.
- (39) Our [Lund University's] study programmes are closely linked to current research, which we regard as an important factor for quality. The majority of our lecturers are also researchers and we place great importance on ensuring that they are skilled educators.

Much like Sandberg (2013) and Gustafsson (2009), I found that the universities not only use evaluative adjectives, but evaluative nouns as well. The nouns are also linked to moral values that the universities deem important and that they think the readers should embrace too. Three of the most reoccurring evaluative nouns are *diversity*, *internationalization* and *innovation*. Diversity implies that the universities value a variety of people; people of different ages, genders

and ethnicities with different interests and cultural backgrounds. This relates to internationalization, which implies that the universities welcome international students from all around the world, as it contributes to the sought-after pluralism. Internationalization can also refer to the universities' ambition to reach beyond the national borders of Sweden with their practices, i.e. their wish that their practices should be of importance and use not only to Swedes, but to people all over the globe. Innovation implies that the universities think it is important to be creative and progressive in order to create and spread new knowledge, perspectives, solutions and products.

The following examples of these evaluative nouns are from the brochures from Uppsala University and Umeå University, found on pages 4 and 1 respectively:

- (40) The [Uppsala] University is characterized by internationalization, diversity, and breadth.
- (41) Throughout our [Umeå University's] proud history, we have remained committed to providing a world-class teaching and research environment that is characterized by excellence, innovation, openness and diversity.

These evaluative nouns are also used to legitimize a specific part of Stockholm University's education, namely the fact that international students attend the university. In example (42), from page 17, it becomes clear that the moral values tied to the nouns are seen as important for the improvement of the university's practice:

- (42) Distinguished people from all over the world come together here [Stockholm University] in an international academic environment. Together they help to improve the quality of the education through innovation, openness and diversity.

The universities are seemingly not very keen on using abstraction and analogies to legitimize their practices, as few instances of these legitimation strategies occur. However, four out of five universities use the word *meeting place* in their brochures, which I interpret as moral evaluation in some form of abstraction. Although, it is probably problematic to classify it as an abstraction according to van Leeuwen's criteria (2007), as it is unclear what concrete practices the word would be an abstraction of. Consider examples (43-44) from the brochures of Stockholm University and Lund University, pages 2 and 4 respectively:

- (43) To our former students, Stockholm University is a meeting place to return to for further development.
- (44) With students from over 100 countries, the [Lund] University is a meeting place which offers opportunities for international engagement, cultural exchange and global networking.

To my understanding, while the universities' buildings are concrete places where people can literally meet, the universities' concept of a meeting place refers to the opportunity to develop new and old skills, gain new knowledge, and make new contacts. Such an opportunity should appeal to readers. I therefore believe that the universities use the figurative meaning of the word *meeting place* rather than the literal meaning. Thus, the word should be regarded as an instance of figurative language, which is abstract in itself.

Stockholm University also legitimizes their education by using an analogy and comparing a degree from them to an award, as seen in the following example from page 7:

- (45) A degree from Stockholm University is an award that makes our graduates attractive and creates opportunities for a career in Sweden or on the international labour market.

According to Stockholm University, receiving a degree is as prestigious and meriting as receiving an award. Personally, I do not believe that an analogy is necessary to convince the readers in this case, as the statement would still convey the same message, only clearer, without the comparison to an award. The graduates' competence, or rather the power of the university degree, would still be acknowledged by the ensuing explanation that it makes graduates attractive and create opportunities.

However, this example is somewhat problematic, because I am unsure if Stockholm University actually mean to use the word *award* as a noun or if they really mean to use it as a verb, as in "the university awards bachelor's degrees to the students." I would argue that in this specific context, especially when in reference to something being merited, *award* occurs more commonly as a verb<sup>6</sup>, which could mean that the university simply used it wrong.

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<sup>6</sup> According to the online dictionary Merriam-Webster's definition of *award*, retrieved (2017-05-07): <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/award>

### 7.3. Rationalization

The results show that the five universities legitimize their practices through rationalization. The rationalization is primarily instrumental, as the universities legitimize their practices by referring to the goals, uses and effects of the practices. There are also some instances of theoretical rationalization, when the universities refer to some kind of truth.

The universities legitimize the way they are conducting education and research by describing the purpose of these practices. The purposes vary somewhat between the universities, but they all contain an element of moralization, as they all strive to become a ‘good’ or ‘better’ university in some way or another. Most of the instrumental rationalization in the brochures is goal-oriented or means-oriented, as the universities often explicitly state the goals they are striving to achieve and by what means they are doing it. An example can be found on page 4 in the University of Gothenburg’s brochure:

- (46) The mission of the University of Gothenburg is to create and disseminate new knowledge. By being open to the outside world and by participating in public debate, the whole work of the University influences and contributes to the development of society.

In example (46), the University of Gothenburg explains why they are open to the outside world and why they participate in public debate: it is because they want to accomplish their mission of creating and disseminating new knowledge, and thus influence and contribute to society, all of which are moralized actions that the readers should find rational.

A similar example can be found in Uppsala University’s brochure, where the university lists what they do in order to reach their ultimate goal. From page 4:

- (47) At the same time, our [Uppsala University’s] ultimate goal is to contribute to changing the world for the better. To achieve this, it is important to cherish our academic freedom and our independence as an academic institution, but also to foster and develop active collaboration and interaction with society.

Since the action of “changing the world for the better” is undoubtedly linked to positive moral values which the readers should be able to get behind, the things the university do to reach their goal are justified.

Both Uppsala University and Stockholm University use goal-oriented rationalization to legitimize their research, specifically in order to explain the focus of their research. In examples (48-49), the universities' research is justified by the moral values tied to the action of helping and improving the lives of ill people. The examples are from page 13 and 14 in the respective universities' brochures:

- (48) With the overall aim to help people survive and live their life to the fullest, research in Uppsala targets the alleviation, healing, and cure of diseases and the development of new drugs, within a dozen areas [...].
- (49) Researchers at the Stress Research Institute [at Stockholm University] study how changes to industry and society affect people's health. The aim is [sic] to create better prevention and treatment of stress-related illnesses.

There also occurs an instance of what I interpret as effect-oriented rationalization. In this case, the purpose is in the effect of an action. Umeå University implicitly explains why they host a large number of international students, teachers and researchers, and justifies it by describing the positive effects of it. These positive effects should in turn persuade the readers. From page 3 in the university's brochure:

- (50) We [Umeå University] host approximately 1,500 international students, teachers and researchers from over 60 different nationalities every academic year. This brings new perspectives to our campus and helps make it a more exciting, creative and culturally diverse academic environment.

Apart from the effect of bringing new perspectives and contributing to cultural diversity, the university could not really have known beforehand what the effect would be. The university could have predicted that the effect would also include more exciting and creative academic environments, but they would not know if it would become reality or not until *after* the hosting of the international students, teachers and researchers. Thus, the purpose turned out to exist in hindsight.

As for theoretical rationalization, there occur legitimation in the form of a definition in Uppsala University's brochure. As seen in example (51), from page 18, the university defines the activity of international cooperation in terms of the moralized activity of improving the

quality of the university's programs. The readers should accept this as a truth of what international cooperation is to the university.

- (51) At Uppsala University, international cooperation represents a means and strategy for improving the quality of research and study programmes.

Furthermore, Lund University legitimizes the actions of their teachers via an explanation:

- (52) We [the teachers at Lund University] educate the knowledge generators, problem solvers and leaders of tomorrow. Our students are taught how to think freely, creatively and critically, and to develop their ability to collaborate in order to tackle demanding problems. We give our students the tools to explore and understand themselves and the world around them.

In example (52), from page 4 of the brochure, Lund University state that the teachers educate their students because they want to help them think freely etc. Educating students is a habitual, and rather obvious, activity of a teacher. Thus, when the teachers at Lund University "give their students the right tools" by educating them, their actions are deemed appropriate, to the extent that it would probably even come off as strange if the teachers did not perform these actions.

Lastly, legitimation in the form of a prediction can be found in Lund University's brochure, on page 5:

- (53) The world-leading research facilities MAX IV and ESS which are being established in Lund will be of great significance for research and industrial development within materials and life sciences. [...] With these facilities, Lund will further reinforce its international research position.

Lund University claim that they already have an international research position, and they make the prediction that this position will be reinforced in the future the by establishment of the mentioned research facilities. The university is presumably basing their prediction on expertise and experience, and can therefore in principle be denied by contrary experience. Nevertheless, the readers should be convinced that the university's practice of research will only keep improving.

## 8. Discussion and future research

In this section, I review and discuss my results in terms of how they can be interpreted and how they relate to previous research. I also discuss suggestions for future research.

### 8.1. Discussion

As concluded in the results section, the University of Gothenburg, Lund University, Stockholm University, Umeå University and Uppsala University legitimize their practices, and thus Swedish higher education, by using the legitimization strategies authorization, moral evaluation and rationalization. More specifically, the five universities primarily use expert authority, authority of tradition, authority of conformity, evaluative words and instrumental rationalization. Thus, the universities try to influence, convince and ultimately attract prospective international students by having experts, traditions and majorities exercise their authority, by expressing and endorsing certain moral values that they hope the readers share, and by making the purposes behind their practices appear rational and logical.

However, much of the legitimation in the brochures is not particularly conventional, at least when following van Leeuwen's (2007) criteria. And in some instances, van Leeuwen's criteria even turned out to be inapplicable to the material to some extent. This most likely has to do with the fact that van Leeuwen's model was not originally intended for this kind of material and discourse. In these cases, I turned to previous research and my own judgment in order to determine if the legitimation could in fact be considered legitimation.

Most of the "unconventional" legitimation were instances of authorization legitimation. For example, according to van Leeuwen (2007:95), expert authority is typically expressed through verbal or mental processes. This notion was not applicable to the brochures, as the universities' practices are described in an informative matter rather than a narrative. There is no one who explicitly 'says' or 'thinks' anything, or in any other way exercise their authority by commending the practices. Instead, the expert authority is expressed implicitly when the universities themselves claim that international ranking lists have decided that their practices are top-ranked, world-leading or the like. In example (25) in section 7.1., the verbal or mental process has been replaced by an "according to..." construction, which I believe works the same way. Getting an objective outsider's assessment, rather than posing as experts themselves, is probably meant to make the universities come across as impartial and the assessment in question as more credible.

Furthermore, as touched upon in section 7.1., the authority of tradition that occurs in the brochures does not occur in the way van Leeuwen describes. Van Leeuwen (2007:96)



characterizes tradition as something someone has always done. However, when the universities refer to their long history, they probably do not want the readers to think that they are upholding traditions by conducting their practices in exactly the same way as centuries ago, as progress definitely is expected in that time. Gustafsson (2009:107-113) also encountered such instances where history was referenced rather than traditions in her study, so she decided to create a variation called “the authority of history”, a form of which is “the authority of experience” [my translations]. I believe that Gustafsson’s variation more accurately explains examples (28-30) in section 7.1., as the universities most likely want to convey that, due to their long history, they have a lot of experience of conducting education and research, and thus have reached a certain level of quality.

These cases suggest that while van Leeuwen’s model is not perfectly applicable to every kind of material and discourse in its original form, it is open for interpretation, seeing as researchers have found ways to build upon it and develop it to fit their needs.

As stated in the results section, I could not find any clear instances of personal authority in the material. As no verbal processes occur in the brochures, there is no one who exercises their authority by telling the readers what to do. Two people who could have exercised personal authority are the vice-chancellors of Umeå University and Uppsala University. The two vice-chancellors appear in their respective universities’ brochures both linguistically and visually on pages 1 and 4, as the brochures contain photos of them with captions that state their name and occupation. The vice-chancellors certainly have status in the context of higher education and research, and they could have used this status to convince readers that their university’s practices are legitimate and to encourage readers to choose their university. But they do no such thing because once again, there occur no verbal processes nor any “according to...” constructions. Perhaps the universities refrain from using personal authority because teachers, researchers, vice-chancellors and the like would come across as biased if they were to legitimize their own practices.

However, it would be possible to treat expert authority as a form of personal authority. Gustafsson (2009:107) found that it was difficult to distinguish between expert and personal authority in her study, so she decided to treat the two types as one. As explained in section 7.1, the experts in my material are the people behind the international ranking lists. Their status as experts is context-based, meaning that their expertise is only justified in the context of higher education, making their authority personal.

As for the legitimation strategies that barely appear in the material, I could only find one instance of impersonal authority. This result was rather expected since higher education is not

mandatory. The universities do not reference to any laws or rules as a way to “force” the readers to attend university, simply because it is voluntary. In her study, Sandberg (2013:31) sees lack of impersonal authority as a sign that the Kungsbacka authorities do not want to appear as authoritative or pushy in their information. The same cannot really be said for the universities in this study, because even though they do not use much impersonal authority, the results show that they are still very authoritative. This implies that the universities want to be authoritative in a personal way and thus encourage the readers by giving them more personal reasons to attend university, for example by giving them role models to look up to, experts to listen to and masses to join.

When it comes to moral evaluation legitimation, the universities do not seem to use many abstractions or analogies. A possible reason for this could be that the brochures are meant to be straightforward presentations of the universities’ practices, and the universities want to convey their information as clearly and concretely as possible. Therefore, they do not use strategies that make the information more abstract and could possibly confuse the readers.

Finally, it is necessary to discuss how the legitimation in the brochures is affected by the social contexts in which it is produced and interpreted. As stated in the method section, my analysis is based on the assumption that the material and its social contexts are closely linked and mutually affect each other.

For example, the universities’ authoritative and argumentative approach could be explained by the context in which the brochures were produced. According to statistics, 27% of the Swedish population, ages 25-64, had a higher education of three years or more in 2016 (Statistiska Centralbyrån (SCB) [Statistics Sweden] 2016a). This number indicates that higher education is a relatively common practice in Sweden, which would create a context where people are not only encouraged to pursue a higher education, but expected to do so. So, while higher education is a voluntary practice, the universities still want to convince the readers that it is the “usual” thing to do, especially by using authority of conformity.

Furthermore, the effect of the social context becomes especially evident in the moral values expressed in the brochures. The five universities claim to value diversity concerning gender, ethnicity and culture. They express this value in their brochures by, for example, stating that they have international students from over 100 countries which make up 20% of the student body (Lund University 2017:14) and by claiming that 42% of their 366 professors are women (Umeå University 2016:3). Furthermore, although I did not conduct a multimodal legitimation analysis, I am taking the photos in the brochures into account here because they clearly also express the above-mentioned value, seeing as they depict students and researchers of different ethnicities

and gender. The fact that all five universities emphasize their desire for diversity imply that the brochures have been produced in a context where diversity is of relevance and importance. In this case, the context would be the country of Sweden.

According to statistics, Sweden is a relatively ethnically diverse country with a multicultural population. As of 2016, 23% of Sweden's population is of foreign background, a number which has grown steadily since 2000 (SCB 2017). Furthermore, since the academic year 2007/08, the higher educational institutions in Sweden have welcomed between 30 000 and 46 000 international students yearly (UKÄ 2016a). These statistics can explain the emphasize on diversity in the universities' brochures. And to an international student, these numbers can be comforting and encouraging, as they would suggest that Swedes are accustomed to and accepting of different ethnicities and cultures.

Moreover, gender diversity, or rather gender equality, is something that Sweden works with on a government level. The Swedish Government's gender equality policy state that they are working towards gender equal education, by which they mean that "women and men, girls and boys must have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to education".<sup>7</sup> To Swedes, it probably is a given that both genders should be able to get a higher education, but for international students from countries without any gender equality policies, it might not be. This can explain why the photos in the brochures evenly depict both female and male students and researchers, seeing as it can inspire and motivate international students regardless of gender to choose a Swedish university.

However, Swedish universities still have a long way to go regarding gender equality among professors. Even though the five universities in this study make a point of including as many female professors as male professors, this balance is far from the truth. In 2015, female professors only made up 25% of the professors employed at Swedish higher educational institutions (SCB 2016b). This suggests that, unlike Umeå University as mentioned above, many Swedish universities are not close to gender equality among their professors. Despite this, the five universities seemingly still wish to encourage their female readers to study and conduct research at a Swedish university, perhaps as a way to make the depicted gender balance in their brochures a reality.

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<sup>7</sup> Information retrieved from the official website of the Government Offices of Sweden (2017-05-03): <http://www.government.se/government-policy/gender-equality/goals-and-visions/>

## **8.2. Future research**

For future studies, there are different ways to further expand upon this study. For one, it would be a very good idea to conduct a multimodal legitimation analysis, seeing as the brochures are essentially multimodal and contain numerous photos. I am confident that many of the photos have legitimizing functions, and thus convey legitimation strategies on their own and in combination with the texts. This should be especially true for the photos depicting presumed students, teachers and researchers, as they should be able to convey authority and moral values, which I touched upon in the discussion section above. A multimodal legitimation analysis would most definitely provide a fuller and more accurate picture of the legitimation in the brochures, and consequently of the effect it is supposed to have on the readers.

It would also be interesting to further examine the production process of the brochures, in order to understand exactly why the brochures contain what they do and look the way they do. By interviewing the producers and those responsible for the brochures, it would be possible to gain more insight into the contexts which shape the brochures. Are the producers of the brochures aware of the legitimation? What conscious choices have they made regarding the format and content, and on what terms? Who is their target audience, in their own words? Do their intentions correspond to what the brochures are actually conveying? The information gained in a more thorough process and context analysis could undoubtedly provide an intriguing contribution to the study.

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