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A study on how EU higher education objectives can appear distorted by level-, actor- and issue-dimensions of governance in Business and Economics bachelor's programs at Swedish University Colleges.

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Abstract

The EU agenda for the whole education area is denounced vital for the economic and social growth of the Union. As such it infers involvement of other policy areas such as research and innovation, foreign policy, or migration for example. This can also be seen in higher education where recent developments include reforms that have granted institutional autonomy to universities, signalling changes in the division of competencies and distribution of responsibilities between governments and higher education institutions. And new forms of governing methods where performance management for example enhanced to increase societal relevance and socio-economic development at both national and regional levels.

In this policy space and by applying a framework suggested by originated from the theory of multi-level governance by Hooghe and Marks (2003), and refined by Vukasovic, M., Jungblut, J., Chou, M. H., Elken, M., & Ravinet, P. (2018) this study explores how three dimensions of governance, multi-level, multi-actor, and multi-issue, is reflected on local, operational level in Swedish higher education. It presents a context transcending from EU to national level by putting focus on the 'international dimension' in bachelor's programs in business and economics. Investigating how a diversity of governance deriving from the above-mentioned levels, different actors and multitude of issues distorts the aims set out by the EU in the highly praised Erasmus program. And by doing so, trying to find explanations to the low mobility numbers among Swedish students.

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Abbreviations.

EC – European Commission

EHEA – European Higher Education Area

ENQUA - The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

EQAR - European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

ERA – European Research Area

ERC – Education and Research Council

ESG - Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

EUA – European University Association

HV - Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (closed in 2013 and the responsibilities were divided between UKÄ and UHR)

PM – Program Manager

SUHF- The association of Swedish higher education institutions

UC – University College

UHR – Swedish council for higher education

UKÄ – Swedish higher education authority

Introduction.

As an international coordinator at a university college (UC) in Sweden my duty, among others, is to support the academic community in making sure that all students receive an international dimension in their education, a phenomenon often described as Internationalization. In higher education this can be defined as:

“The intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society. “De Wit et al (2015).

In the Swedish higher education act (1992:1434) this is mentioned accordingly ‘Furthermore, in their operations higher education institutions should promote understanding of other countries and of international circumstances’ (Chapter 1, §5). When EU introduced the Erasmus program¹ in 1987 (Sweden joined in 1992) - mobility, or student exchange, became an important tool to achieve this. Since then, the program has grown, (often referred to as an EU success story of European integration²) and today it offers a wide range of opportunities not only for higher education but also for vocational education and training, school education, adult education, youth, and sport. And in scope of the new Erasmus program (2021-2027) the commission sets the goal that 25% of all students in higher education shall have participated in a mobility during their studies. For Sweden in 2018 this number was 7,4%. In the subject of Business and Economics it was 4,4%.

So, it is fair to say that Swedish students are among the less internationally mobile of the EU countries in that sense. And focusing in on publicly funded institutions, the students at university colleges are less eager compared to students at large research focused universities. (The private institutions are performing well but without doing any deeper investigation both Chalmers University of technology and Stockholm School of Economics are heavily research focused and therefore similar to larger universities. And Jönköping University has an international profile, so you expect them to do well). In Appendix 1 there is three different tables with relevant statistics on the subject which can be of help to visualize the conditions.

EU have high ambitions for the education area, denouncing it as vital for the economic and social growth of the Union. This implies both massification – a larger volume of the population taking part in education. And an increasing focus on knowledge as the basis for inclusive and sustainable-, social-, cultural-, political- as well as economic development (Vukasovic, Jungblut, Chou, Elken & Ravinet. 2018). The centrality of knowledge also further suggests that EU decisions concerning higher education are connected to policy development other sectors such as research, welfare, environment,

¹ European exchange program that started in 1987. From the beginning, eleven countries were covered, and more than 3,000 people participated in the exchange. Today, 33 countries are included in the program and over 300,000 participate annually. In total, over nine million people have participated in Erasmus since its inception. The European Commission wants to double the number of participants by 2025.

<https://www.europaportalen.se/2018/02/svagt-svenskt-intresse-identitetsstarkande-eu-satsning>

² See for example: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/is-erasmus-europes-success-story/> by Jan Truszczyński. Published 17 december 2012.

employment, trade, migration, or security (Busemeyer et al. 2013; Gornitzka and Maassen 2014; Jungblut 2015).

Swedish higher education policy is characterized by a number of different goals that operate in parallel, competition and coordination, concentration and regional relocation, governance towards goals and qualitative assessments. Swedish higher education policy is a collage of ambitions, which Swedish universities and colleges then have to handle and merge to action according to Benner (2018). Such diversification increases the expectations and demands on local higher education institutions to deliver not only 'knowledge' but innovation for growth, competitiveness, and prosperity in the region where it is situated. See Franke (2006). The University college as an entity has supervened from the higher education reform of 1977 (UKÄ – Den Svenska högskolans historia. Åren 1900 – 2000). In the 1960s, Sweden introduced a general student support system to give more young people the opportunity to study. Universities were established in new locations. The reform was partly affected by the political upheavals of 1968. An important purpose of the 1977 higher education reform was to give a much larger proportion of the population access to higher education.

Zooming in on the issue of internationalization, I propose to situate this study along this vertical axis from EU policy governance to local context of UCs in Sweden. The historical and politicized emergence of UCs in Sweden, the more recent developments in governance structures and the multitude of parallel issues implies an interesting area of research with possible wider implications. I intend to focus on internationalization as it is connected to my everyday professional duties and placed in the linkage space between this EU policy governance and higher education governance on a local level.

Research aim and questions.

The aim of this study is to comprehend how local higher education governance on program level operate the issue of promoting understanding for other countries and international circumstances – the international dimension. And by using student mobility as a focal point direct the reader towards one possible explanation as to why Swedish students are among the least mobile within the European Union.

There have been many explanation attempts to this: It has been suggested that UCs have the 'wrong' student body. They are not interested in going abroad during their education, since their main focus is on the upcoming professional life. Or the teachers are not interested in international dimensions enough. It is not rewarding career wise. A three-year bachelor program has no room for a semester abroad. Or the degree awarded is aiming at a local job market rather than an international career. These are some of the explanations as to why the mobility rate is low.

To research this problem, it is arguably time to turn towards the governance aspect. If you search any higher education website for information about a specific program you always find a person responsible. The role as program manager indicates responsibility and authority towards the student body on a program in that way. Another governance mechanism close to the students is the program curriculum. A document that can be interpreted as a contract between the university and the student. As this master thesis presents an opportunity to study higher education governing dimensions of internationalization against a theoretical backdrop this role and document have key functions. The

highest student numbers in Sweden belongs to the subject Business and Economics³. Business and Economics, or Business Administration – there can be different titles - Programs provides here a researchable entity. It is taught at 24 different institutions. 82 programs offer a degree in the subject, and I have reasonable access to empirical material, so this is a suitable context for a study like this.

In practice I would argue that preconditions, both historical - in the sense of the university college institutions origin in the Swedish higher education landscape and history, its objectives – to provide education in a regional/local setting based on its need for a qualified workforce. And more contemporary progress in governance structure and autonomy as well as globalization trends are all contributory factors to the situation and needs to be addressed.

I propose to frame this through a theoretical conceptualization based in Multi-Level Governance (MGL) theory. This implies that in order to understand the special conditions and nuances of higher education governance it is necessary to conceptually distinguish between three dimensions:

1. The multi-level dimension that focuses on how authority is distributed or concentrated across governance levels.
2. The multi-actor dimension where the involvement of non-state actors is a key feature, and
3. The multi-issue dimension which concern clashes as well as complementarities between policy sectors. (Vukasovic, Jungblut, Chou, Elken & Ravinet. 2018)

I am hypothesizing that higher education governance mechanisms that are situated close to the students get distorted by these multi -levels, -actors and -issues. Which have an inhibitory effect on international mobility among students. And in line with the research aim of the study the questions for research are therefor:

In the context of Swedish UCs bachelor programs in business administration not reaching the goal of 25 % of the students participating in international exchange during their study period.

-How are the conditions for internationalization framed in the program governance document Curriculum?

-What role does the program manager play to secure that all students enrolled receive an international dimension during the course of a study program?

³ UKÄ provides national statistics which shows that numerically the most students in Sweden are enrolled within the social science and law subject area. <https://www.uka.se/statistik--analys/statistikdatabas-hogskolan-i-siffror/statistikomrade.html?statq=https://statistik-api.uka.se/api/totals/33>. The statement that Business and Economics is the largest subject comes from the report: Från ABCD till textile management: Tradition och förnyelse i svenska företagsekonomiska utbildningar <https://www.fekis.se/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Fra%CC%8An-ABCD-till-textilt-management-Tradition-och-fo%CC%88rnyelse-i-svenska-fo%CC%88retagekonomiska-utbildningar-v2.pdf>

Outline of the study.

Following the introductory chapter where the research problem and aim is presented is a section that will guide the reader into previous research done in the field. It focuses on how higher education governance mechanisms transcends from European policy level to local, operational level. This is followed by a chapter where the underlying theory of multi-level governance is introduced and debated. Followed by the theoretical framework used in the study. More specifically it introduces the three dimensions of governance that function as an analytical framework for the study. Whereupon the reader is given insight into the methods that is best suited for this case study research and which empirical data is used. The next section presents the results that the data has produced and finally the conclusions that can be drawn as well as a discussion of suitable ways forward ends the thesis.

Previous research.

Since the aim of the study is to investigate the role of governance this section focuses on three main conditions for the study namely the EU provisions for higher education, and national higher education governance and local governance of higher education in Sweden. The aim is to present how previous research has discussed these issues from various perspectives and by doing so laying a scholarly foundation for the research problem and the relevance of the study.

Higher education and the EU.

As a basic condition for my study is the increasing role of Europe — in particular, the construction of the European Research Area and the European Education Area — as it has added an additional governance level to higher education according to Fumasoli. (2015). Although closely interconnected the focus will be on the latter.

The European Education Area and its judicial and political policy framework is of importance for the contextual comprehension of the research problem. In an article by Lawn (2011) on the topic of Standardizing the European Education policy space the author declares: “Europeanization processes in education have some subtle and yet powerful features created through measurement and standardization. They may have a technical form, but they are knowledge based, policy driven and exclude politics. Europe is at the leading edge of new forms of governance in education”.

“Europeanisation” is described by Teichler (2004) as an EU version of the terms internationalization or globalization. In a national and local context, it becomes internationalization. The measurement and standardization attributes are manifested by the EU agendas for a knowledge-led society and globalization where two main European policies are of relevance in this context: The Bologna process⁴ and the Lisbon strategy⁵, (later followed by the Europe 2020⁶ update strategy).

⁴ The Bologna Process is an intergovernmental higher education reform process that includes 49 European countries and a number of European organisations, including EUA. Its main purpose is to enhance the quality and recognition of European higher education systems and to improve the conditions for exchange and collaboration within Europe, as well as internationally. <https://www.eua.eu/issues/10:bologna-process.html>

⁵ The Lisbon Strategy, also known as the Lisbon Agenda or Lisbon Process, is an action and development plan for the European Union. It was originally set out by the Lisbon European Council of 23-24 March 2000 which articulated a new strategic goal for the EU: ‘to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion’. The Lisbon Strategy aimed to deal with the low productivity and stagnation of economic growth in the EU, through the formulation of various policy initiatives to be taken by all EU Member States. In particular, this included ‘modernising the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion’. <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/industrial-relations-dictionary/lisbon-strategy>

⁶ The Europe 2020 Strategy is the EU common strategy for growth and jobs that has been in place since June 2010. Europe 2020 is used as a reference framework for activities at EU and at national and regional levels. The strategy has three overall priorities that are mutually reinforcing: Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation, Sustainable growth: promote a more resource-efficient, greener and more competitive economy, and Inclusive growth: stimulating an economy with high employment and social and territorial cohesion. <https://www.government.se/sweden-in-the-eu/europe-2020/>

A focus on the Bologna process whereas employability, learning outcomes, mobility, internationalization, quality, and lifelong learning have become important and ingrained elements of our education system. See Sursock & Smidt, (2010). The linkage from EU level down to local level is widely researched and framed in many cases, as the local institutional agenda for quality assurance and national educational policy making and reform has been interwoven with the Bologna process (Palfreyman, 2008; Jakobi and Rusconi, 2009).

Wilson (2009) argues that the reform progress and implementation of the Bologna process differs between European regions stating that Western Europe countries have had focus on quality and structure of their program. In a Swedish context this was realized by the Government bill 2004/05:162, 'Ny värld - ny högskola' (2004). The bill was adopted by the Parliament in February 2006 and changes in the Higher Education Act and Higher Education Ordinance commenced 1 July 2007. This focus on quality and structure seems to be supported by Ulrich Teichler (2019) as he argues that "the Bologna process rather seems to have improved the conditions and the quality of intra-European mobility more substantially than its quantitative development" pointing at the fact that some nations with low outward mobility have difficulties reaching the EU mobility goals. Significantly so in the Nordic countries. (See appendix 1 , table 1 for Swedish context)

National higher education governance in Sweden.

The autonomy of Swedish Universities is of central importance to my study. University autonomy reforms have been widely studied. Recently the European University Association (EUA) has, for example, "scored" the formal autonomy status of universities along various autonomy dimensions (Estermann and Nokkala 2009; Estermann et al. 2011).

Agneta Bladh (2007) discusses in an article if greater autonomy in theory always leads to more freedom in practice and argues that it does not but rather: "dependency on new external factors, such as increased external economic support, has reduced independence both at the institutional and the individual level. In order to counterbalance these external forces, clear and distinct academic leadership is required, along with increased goal orientation in the internal decision-making of higher education institutions." (Abstract) Her scholarly work can be viewed in the light of her appointment by the Swedish government to lead the pre study work on a national strategy for internationalization in 2017.

Linda Wedlin and Josef Pallas have in the introductory chapter to the book 'Det ostyrda universitetet?' (2017) presented higher education governance in a national perspective which rationale fits as a theoretical backdrop of this study:

"The state traditionally has a strong role in the governance of many countries' education systems. The Swedish system has historically been characterized by strong and clear governance from the state through both formal regulations, (higher education act and higher education ordinance), governance of funding and resources and previously to varying degrees also directly through appointments and still practiced - dimensioning of the education for example".

They points towards that through increased influence of what is often called *new public management*, or more generally: goals and performance management, a reformed role for the state in governance and regulation in recent

decades can be detected. Rather than governance through formal rules and directives, governance has increasingly focused on the review and evaluation of activities and on new systems for measuring and comparing performance and activities. In light of this, there has been a trend towards a evaluative state, where the state has taken a reviewing and supervising role in higher education. With such governance, it is not only formal regulation that is the subject of discussion and debate, but also the design of quality review systems and follow-ups. In this context, the discussion about the role and mission of other governmental organizations, such as authorities like UKÄ also has a clear place in the development of state governance. See for example SOU 2012:1⁷.

They also argue that in addition to the state and its representatives, new actors with their own interests also take their place in the governance of universities. In what is sometimes described as a growing "marketisation" of higher education and research, governance has come to be driven and characterized by market thinking and rhetoric that positions universities as actors in a global and competitive "knowledge market". The growing interest in ranking lists, accreditation, and other forms of certification systems for universities and university colleges is significant, and these systems have increased in number since the beginning of the 2000s and are today central elements of the global governance ideal surrounding higher education institutions and universities. Through such systems, external stakeholders, like media and the "customers" they claim to represent, gain increased influence in the governance of the activities of higher education institutions. This form of evaluation and scrutiny is particularly clearly linked to concepts such as excellence and competition and is in many respects based on the idea of markets as a guiding principle.

Local governance at higher education institutions.

In a local level context, there are four governance conceptualizations of relevance to this study. New public management and quality assurance system. And collegial versus managerial principles. "Regardless of the level at which the concept of a knowledge enterprise is applied, it implies the same kind of expectations about authority relationships and leadership qualities. How they are balanced against one another will depend on how incentives are linked to them and what resources are available for that purpose". Bleiklie, (1998).

New public management (NPM) – or steering by goals and performance management. The scholarship on new public management is vast and from a literature review point it could be discussed whether it belongs in a national or local governance section. Since the local context is predominant to this study it ends up here.

Tolofari, (2005) presents a historical backdrop to the NPM concept. Public administration has always been under constant review. From the end of the 1970s to the 1990s, however, governments around

⁷ 'The Government wishes a more efficient and effective organization of the activities currently conducted at the National Agency for Higher Education, the National Agency for Higher Education Services (VHS) and the International Program Office for the Education Area (IPK). The purpose is to create an efficient and clear division of responsibilities, where the auditing activities are separated from the promoting and service-oriented activities.

Parts of the activities currently conducted at the National Agency for Higher Education will be streamlined into a new review authority and thereby strengthened so that the new authority has a clear review function in the higher education system with responsibility for quality assurance and supervision'. <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2012/01/sou-20121/>

the world were engaged in widespread and sustained reforms of their public administration. These reforms were born out of economic recession, but also had political and social drivers. They were initiated by the political apex and fueled by New Right ideology predominant in the 1980s in the UK by Margreth Thatcher's regime. Collectively, these reforms came to be termed New Public Management. NPM is characterized by marketisation, privatization, managerialism, performance measurement and accountability. Performance measurement, accountability and marketization to some extent are addressed in this study but the other concepts are left uncommented. Although managerialism is defined in scholarships as an ideology distinguished by to which extent it serves to maintain relation of power and domination according to Deem & Brehoney (2005).

Ferlie, Musselin & Andresani, (2008). Discusses the NPM concept as a narrative of public sector reforming. Defining it as a narrative because it is not a pure analytical framework aiming at comprehension. It mixes technical and also political and normative elements in that sense. This conceptualization fits with the aim of this study.

The performance measurement and accountability feature of NPM has put focus on the quality assurance system as an element of governance. (for example, Arroy et al. 2014; Hellmark Knutsson 2015). In a European perspective, QA is the responsibility of the ENQA⁸ and UKÄ is the Swedish authority responsible. Internationalization in higher education has resulted in "a growing demand for accountability and transparency . . . [which has] in turn led to a need to develop a quality culture, while addressing the challenges of globalized higher education" (Smidt, 2015, p. 626) A comprehensive review of literature has been published by Patricia Ryan (2015). It provides an overview of accreditation as a mechanism to ensure quality in higher education, examines models of QA, and explores the concept of quality. In addition, her paper provides a review of research on the effectiveness of quality assurance practices, with a particular focus on student involvement with quality assurance. As such it brings rationale to the emergence of this study.

In the scholarly work by Shirin Albäck Öberg and Elin Sundberg (2015) it is initially established that higher education institutions in Sweden funded by government is a part of the public authority structure and as a consequence there are two governing principles operative within the institution simultaneously. Collegial and managerial governance. They depict the collegial as a bottoms – up approach, characterized by shared responsibility led by academic freedom and professional wisdom. The managerial is more a top – down approach of leadership. Where power and authority come from the level in the hierarchy.

The collegial principle emphasizes the collective – the scientific community - is considered having more wisdom than the individual. Björck (2013).

⁸ ENQA was first established in 2000 as the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education to promote European cooperation in the field of quality assurance in higher education. In 2004, it became the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education with the aim to contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of European higher education, and to act as a major driving force for the development of quality assurance across all the Bologna Process signatory countries. <https://www.enqa.eu/>

This is some of the previous scholarship that brings contextualization to this study. It is in no way comprehensive on the definition of governance but rather a sample of the complexity of the issue which benefits the framing of the study in the literature.

Theory.

This study is best viewed through the lenses of multi-level governance theory as the preconditions for the alleged 'international dimension' in higher education is diffuse on the account of responsibility and authority. In this section the theory is introduced. Its main features, concepts and main criticism are discussed in the context of higher education governance.

Introducing multi-level governance theory.

Multi-level governance was first introduced by Marks in the early 1990s with the purpose to explain European integration in a way that distinguished it from the two predominant theoretical strains namely neofunctionalism (Haas, 1958) and intergovernmentalism (Hoffman, 1966). A main argument is that there are in fact other level actors than EU and the nation states - subnational actors, who's actions have an impact on the more contemporary developments of integration. MLG is therefore presented as a theory where power has shifted from national governments to both EU institutions but also regional assemblies and local authorities. And there are direct connections between local actors and European level actors that suggests that the nation states do not have monopoly access to the power (Hooghe and Marks 2014). Further, multi-level governance within the EU is understood as respecting competences, sharing responsibilities, and cooperating between the various levels of governance: the EU, the Member States, and the regional and local authorities. In this context, it refers to the principle of subsidiarity, which places decisions as close as possible to the citizens and ensures that that action at Union level is justified considering the possibilities available at national, regional, or local level. (Committee of the Regions 2014).

The diffuseness attribute is scholarly addressed by Miquel, Cabeza & Anglada, (2013) "multi-level governance is an empirical concept useful to describe new forms of state power organization based on a double process: an increase in the distribution of power between different levels of government and the creation of policymaking coalitions that only in part consist of representatives of the state (Giersig, 2008, p. 55) and that operate at different levels. These coalitions tend to blur the boundaries between the responsibilities of state, market, and civil society. This generates new opportunities for civil- society and market actors to influence policy- making processes".

Hooghe and Marks (2003) point at two distinct types of MLG can be identified. One where levels of authority is designed to comprise a set system of governance and another where focus is on task jurisdiction which may shift and overlap depending on contextual situation. Both this horizontal and vertical dimension of governance conceptualization is of importance to the study I am proposing. The vertical dimension refers to the linkages between higher and lower levels of higher education governance and the horizontal dimension to its connection to the variety of policy areas comprised in the higher education institutions mission.

Another way of conceptualizing MLG is presented by Piattoni (2010) as she proposed three MLG dimensions: (1) domestic-international reflecting the EU as a governance layer beyond the nation state. (2) centre-periphery signifying the devolution of authority to local actors (higher education institutions). (3) state-society referring to the involvement of non-state actors.

Piattoni points towards three challenges for the MLG theory: Theoretically, empirically, and normative. From a theoretical point of view, it is unclear whether MLG refers to *processes or to situations, to strategies or to structures*. The ontology of the contextual framing needs to be addressed to determine the theoretical relevance.

Empirically it needs to be distinguished from other concepts of relevance and epistemologically situated in terms of abstraction (ladder of abstraction) for this she refers to Sartori (1984). In this case the governance definition is of key importance. The focus on knowledge as a foundation for inclusive, sustainable, social, and economic development for the EU is a relevant focal point for such considerations.

Thirdly she highlights the question whether governance decisions through MLG are more legitimate than decisions made through other processes asking for the normative relevance of MLG. There is a large debate on legitimacy of the EU grounded in 'output legitimacy' (effectiveness, responsiveness) or it must also be grounded in 'input legitimacy' (participation, representation) (Andersen and Eliassen 1996; Beetham and Lord 1998; Banchoff and Smith 1999; Smismans 2004, 2006; Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2007).

Nonetheless the MLG perspective has also several critics (Bache, 2008; Peters and Pierre, 2009). First, for its lack of explanatory power – what hypotheses can be formulated and tested? second, for its normative stance – MLG is presented as more efficient and democratic than command and control; and third, for assuming that shared participation on decision-making amounts to equal power among actors, particularly in policy implementation. The normative stance can be detected in the mentioned definition by the Committee of the Regions (2014)

A main critique on Hooghe & Marks and Piattoni's conceptualizations of high relevance here is the reference to "levels", a predominant focus in precedent research. Which is problematic if you consider distribution of authority across governance levels *and* sectors. These two aspects need to be conceptually distinct and makes it relevant to look beyond such earlier typology according to Vukasovic, Jungblut, Chou, Elken, & Ravinet (2018). They instead propose a conceptual framework of three distinct characteristics of governance of higher education namely *multi-level, multi-actor* and *multi-issue* dimensions. Arguably this comprehensive conceptual focal point is beneficiary for my research aim and deemed necessary to allow for both nuanced and vigorous analysis of the results in my opinion. The scholars also suggest that this three-dimension conceptualization is suitable for operating in other contexts than the original MLG theory which focused on EU – nation states relations. It is striking is how research on multi- level governance has broadened over time and spilled over into many different independent areas. A statement this study would arguably explore.

'MLG challenges traditional comparative analysis research, based primarily on national systems and higher education institutions' (Kosmützky, 2015).

Multi-dimensions down the governance ladder – From global to local, operational.

This section intends to illustrate how the three dimensions theoretical concept briefly introduced in the previous section connects to the empirical context of the study making it comprehensible to the reader. It starts with a deeper theoretical exploration of the three multi dimensions followed by defining the contextual empirical boundaries of this study. Finally, the connection between theory and empirical is established as a foundation for the analytical sections that lays ahead.

As part of the research of understanding the MLG theory, there has been criticism of MLG as a concept over time has been the subject of 'concept stretching', i.e., the concept is used too broadly in many different research areas to answer all sorts of research questions. This is a risk that Sartori (1970) already warned about. The fact that the EU uses MLG as a governance model can be interpreted as proof of this.⁹

Chou et al (2017) believes, however, that the theory can be used in the context of higher education governance, but that a three-dimensional conceptualization is required that goes further than previous research has done. For example, Marks & Hooghe or Piattoni. The latter also suggested three dimensions of MLG (1) Domestic - International that relate to levels of governance across the nation. (2) Center - periphery where the focus is on outsourcing responsibility to local actors (such as universities) within states and (3) State - society where actors other than states are meant. Although to universal in this context according to the authors. So as theoretical focal point for this study it is the conceptual division of three dimensions suggested by Chou et al and further explained accordingly:

Multi-level attributes. Here, the authors mean that it is important to focus on the processes that aim to distribute or concentrate power to different levels within a specific context.

Multi-actor attributes. That there are different actors who can influence decisions that are made. These can be internal or external.

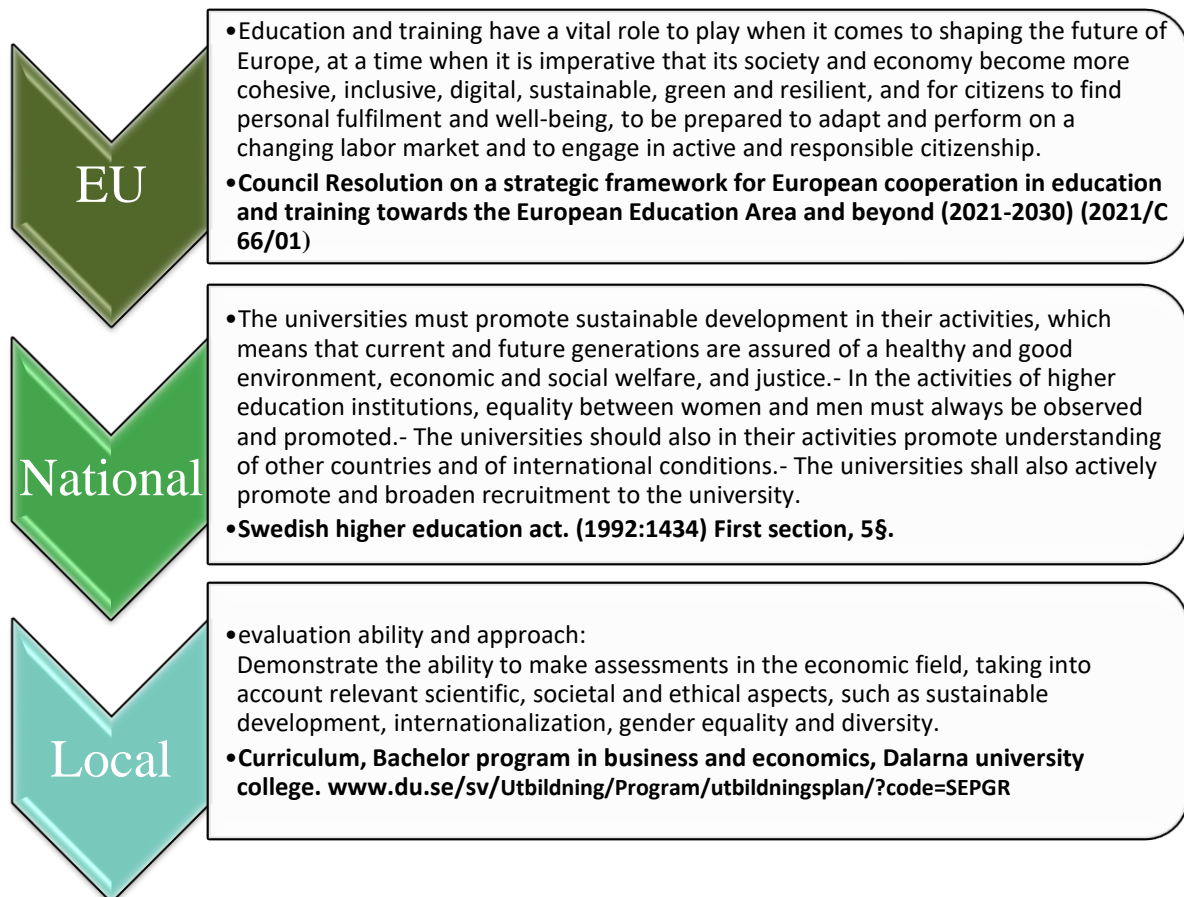
Multi-issue attributes. Focusing on goal conflicts and synergy effects can arise in a context where different sectors have different basic purposes.

I have chosen to place this study in the business and Economics program on bachelor level at broad university colleges in Sweden (university college or university of applied science). These entities have a special place in the educational landscape, originating in political regional policy decisions and based on a historical emergence of higher education in Sweden that provides a good starting point. An initial mapping shows that the program is available at almost all higher education institutions that offers a broad variety of education in Sweden and its structure (content and structure) looks surprisingly similar. It creates generalizable conditions at national level. A deeper outline of business and Economics programs

⁹ In an EU context, MLG has been defined by the Committee of the Regions as: "based on coordinated action by the EU, the Member States and regional and local authorities according to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and in partnership, taking the form of operational and institutionalised cooperation in the drawing-up and implementation of the European Union's policies" Committee of the Regions (2014). www.cor.europa.eu.

education in the Swedish higher education landscape is included as part of the method and material sections of this study. The relevant political regional policy factor can be described as the university's focus on producing employable students for a regional labor market. To create connections between the EU and the local level, it is in the link between the EU's overall socio-economic goals with education which can be obtained from the EU 2020 Agenda¹⁰ Sweden's general aims for higher education and regional/local goals with education that focuses on the social dimension. It is also in this space that the relevance of the three multi-dimensions can be evaluated and the focus for the multi-level dimension can thus act as a starting point.

Table 1. An illustration of how issues transcend down the levels.



The limits of this study infer that the multi-issue dimension will focus the attention to employability, internationalization, sustainability, and diversity. (Here the diversity concept is merged from equality, ethnicity, or function variations) as illustrated by table 1 here above.

The multi-actor dimension is closely connected to levels and it is deemed necessary to pay attention to internal and external actors. External actors can be (locally) representatives from business and industry. Internal can be student representation. Nationally there is the UKÄ quality assurance process

¹⁰ EUROPE 2020 A European strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth
<https://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%200007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

which however have strong links both upwards on EU level and downwards in local governance structure of education councils within the organization.

Method and material.

In this section the study's methodological framework is presented. Beginning with an exposition of the research design and followed by an introduction to the empirical material selected to catch the research aim and questions. On it follows a more detailed presentation of the different empirical sources. Finally, the questions of validity and reliability is addressed before moving on to presenting the results.

Research design.

To gain a comprehensive view of the research problem I propose a design which implies a qualitative case study with a deductive approach on how local governance mechanisms close to the students focus on internationalization is framed in bachelor's program in Business and Economics at Swedish University Colleges.

A case study approach like this, where it is of key importance to catch the implication of all three multi-dimensions requires the collection of empirical data from multiple sources to gain a holistic view. Dooley (2002, p 335), Yin (2010), Denscombe (2014 p 62). Therefore, the empirical sources come from document analysis of program governance on local level complemented by interviews with key staff for deeper understanding of underlying dispositions level as I assume legal texts to be quite polished in that sense.

Material introduction.

The document analysis of program governance is summative in its design as no specific coding structure is deemed necessary for the analysis. "A summative content analysis involves counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context". Hsieh & Shannon (2005). It is program curriculums that entails program governance documentation. Its legal status is well defined in the higher education ordinance chapter 16. (1993:100)

For the interviews key staff is defined as program managers or equivalent with insight knowledge on characteristics and details that are not to be found in written text. For this empirical data it is vital to probe for views and opinions. The interviews are semi structured, allowing the respondents to elaborate and expand their answers.

Curriculums.

Curriculums is a legal document that establish the conditions for a program. 'A curriculum serves as a single document with the information and other provisions that need to be clarified for the student regarding the educational program structure, focus and organization in general' SUHF recommendation 2011:1. You could view it as terms of an agreement to what the students can expect from the program provider. Both in regard to academic content in the form of courses included and structure – meaning how the program is composed. It also states eligibility rules and the name and criteria of the degree awarded upon completion in summary.

It is mainly the Higher Education Act (1992:1434) and Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) that govern the operations of higher education institutions in Sweden. (hereafter called the act and the

ordinance). The Act contains provisions about the higher education institutions that are accountable to the government, local authorities, or county councils. These provisions are often supplemented by the regulations in the Higher Education Ordinance. It contains regulations that supplement or clarify the provisions contained in the Higher Education Act. The paragraphs regarding curriculums in the ordinance are:

16 § For study programs, there shall be a curriculum. 14 § states that there must be syllabuses for the courses within the program. Regulation (2006: 1053).

17 § The curriculum shall state the following: the courses that the program covers, the requirements for special eligibility and the other regulations that are needed. Regulation (2010: 1064). The formulation on 'other regulations needed' that, being inexplicit makes it relevant to explore in the context of the analytical framework of this study.

For this part of the study an empirical dataset 10 units were deemed sufficient and selected based on the following criteria: Firstly, The UCs location in the Swedish higher education landscape and history. More specifically how they were established meaning – university colleges established on political grounds of regional development: In the 1960s, Sweden introduced a general student support system to give more young people the opportunity to study. Universities were established in new locations. And because of their purpose - An important purpose of the 1977 higher education reform was to give a much larger proportion of the population access to higher education. Higher education also became more regulated and utilitarian. Broadened recruitment became a new element in the university and college world. The reform was partly affected by the political upheavals of 1968.

Secondly because they all offer a traditional bachelor program in business administration with similar structure and content as universities. See table 10. As the analytical framework shows the program can be found at 18 different institutions and there are 21 programs that gives a degree of bachelor's in business administration. The numerical difference depends on if the degree is named 'bachelor's degree in science with a major in Business Administration' or 'bachelor's f science in Business and Economics' A distinction mainly depending on the level of details in the content structure of the subjects in a program. It is mainly the first criteria that excludes older (and younger) universities BA programs to be part of the dataset. The presumption is that the historical purpose of UCs – regional development and utilization, constitute distinctions relevant to consider in this study. Such division gave at first 10 units to analyze (private institutions were removed prior to this stage). At this point also the geographical aspect was addressed. It would not be unjustifiable to make some remarks and comments regarding the location of the UCs as different regions have different industrial and business traditions. This is perhaps more significant if you consider the variety of programs with a profile in the UC: s portfolios. For the limitations of this study, it is deemed of minor relevance although worth mentioning in the analysis.

One UC (BTH) were however removed from the dataset since no traditional BA program were found in its portfolio. There is a BA program, but the degree awarded is a MScs in Economics. Not a bachelor as for the rest of the set.

All curriculums were retrieved from the UC: s websites where the BA program was presented. In two cases as text directly published on the website but for the majority as a PDF document retrievable through a click of a button.

Interviews.

To complement the document review, interviews with key staff are deemed required at this stage. Key staff is defined as program managers. In this case their perception of prevailing circumstances allows for a dimension beyond written policy and legal framework. The program manager role can have different titles, education leader, program leader for example. In this context it is the person who is responsible for the program towards the students admitted. There can arguably be other categories of staff suitable to answer questions on program governance, but the program manager position is selected for two main reasons other than the position towards the students. 1. To be able to compare the different UCs and 2. because the role is preconceived to be fuzzy when it comes to authority and responsibilities as presented by Arntzen (2016) “During the latter decades new perspectives on academic leadership have emerged along with new ways of organizing the decision-making structure. The image of academic leader as manager has slowly but steadily been diffused internationally. In addition to the structural changes in the system of higher education the idea of new public management has changed the way academic work is supposed to be managed, in favor of enhanced managerial control and high demands on academic staff. It is reasonable to assume that these changes within the higher educational institutions, along with changes in the relationship between the government and the higher educational institutions, has led to changes in the role of the leaders, both referring to the tasks leaders are supposed to solve and which responsibility and authority they have”.

From the nine UCs selected for the document review section of this study seven were singled-out for interview. The two initially removed were based in the fact that they offer an international BA bachelor program in their program portfolio and it was assumed that students interested in international activities were likely to participate in this program alternative which would heavily affect the regular BA program when it comes to internationalization.

An email was sent to program managers according to the institutions websites asking for participation in an interview where the respondents were introduced to the study and general expectations in a covering letter (annexed). Upon contact a more detailed structure for the interview (annexed) was sent together with a consent form explaining the anonymity and publication of the study issues among other. (annexed).

Two program managers rejected the request in a friendly manner. The reasons given were in one case none and in the other related to how short the interviewee held the position, but 5 interviews were booked and conducted following the same structure and timeframe of one hour.

The experience of the role among the interviewees ranged from one year up to five. One held the position of division leader – a level above program manager for many years prior to this position and could therefore relate to the interview questions from a different hierarchy level. Two were academically experienced holding the position of senior lecturer. The other three were lecturers and two of them had large experience from the local business and trade community although with very different perspective namely by public authority and private companies.

All the PM reported student contact as an important and part of the role. The programs were all traditional bachelors program with similar structure and content. The Auditing specialization had the highest student numbers at all institutions even though the path within the program could vary among them.

Validity, reliability, and bias.

To ensure high validity the program governance documentation have been limited to program curriculums. There are arguably a high number of policies, strategies and working instructions used in higher education governance that could help bring further understanding to the research aim. And another study might benefit from consider them all. In this case it is deemed satisfactory to focus the attention towards the curriculums as they comprise of a comparative entity. It is situated close to the students which is of relevance. It can also be found on the institutions websites, a reliable and transparent source, making it generalizable and possible to extend to other subject areas than the one in question here.

As key staff the program managers at UCs that offer a traditional bachelor's degree in Business and Economics were selected. There can be other roles or positions more suitable to represent the UC in terms of understanding the context but by using the program manager role the study can be extended outside the subject area and national context, making it generalizable. When the interviewees were contacted, they were introduced to the theoretical framework in an interview structure document (Appendix 2 and 3). This was done to give them some preparatory understanding for the research aim.

As a professional administrator with 15 years' experience in the field my prejudice must be considered. By implying the interview structure, allowing the respondents to elaborate freely, not correcting them or interpret their answers in the interview situation I believe this has been addressed. The methodical procedure for qualitative interviewing introduced by Mayo and presented in Brinkmann (2013, p 8) has guided me in this process.

Guaranteeing a reliable interpretation of the results has been one of the more challenging tasks. Here the researcher is the lens the material and theory are passing through before they end up as findings in the results section and efforts to be as transparent as possible in describing how this process was made.

The term 'managerial' is used broadly to define governance that is opposed to 'collegial'. It's a simplification of a complexed concept necessary in the scope of this study.

Results.

In this section the result of the study is presented. Firstly, by a short introduction to the Business and Economics subject location in the Swedish higher education space drawn from an initial mapping done to frame it contextually. This is followed by a presentation of the two different sources that have contributed to the results in the order: Curriculums and interviews. Each section ends with some conclusive remarks on the result.

Business and Economics in the Swedish higher education landscape.

In 2020, at the FEKIS association¹¹ annual conference two researchers presented a charting report of bachelor's program in Business and Economy in Sweden. The information in the following section is extracted from that report. Jernberg & Sarlöv (2020). According to UKÄ there are 50 institutions that offer education in accordance with the higher education act and ordinance in Sweden. 17 holds the status of university and 13 are denoted as university college. Out of these 30 institutions there are six that does not offer a degree of bachelor's in business administration due to their special focus (nursing, defense, sports etc.). On a national level business administration is consequently offered by 24 higher education institutions and every year there are 7382 seats available at 82 different programs. They can be divided in categories illustrated below in table 2:

Table 2. Illustrating the division of degrees awarded in Business and Economic at Swedish higher education institutions. Suggested by Jernberg & Sarlöv (2020)

Degree of master's in business and economics ¹²	A professional degree that are considered to be on bachelor's level despite its title	In Sweden there are 9 programs (11%) in this category. (Out of 82)
Degree of master's in business and economics (with a profile)	Same as above except for the profile.	There are 7 programs (8,5%) in this category.
Degree of bachelor's in business and economics (traditional)		21 programs (26%) on a national level offered.
Degree of bachelor's in business and economics (with a profile)		45 programs (55%) on a national level offered

The study is focused on the third category – Bachelor's degree (traditional). Although there is a large number of profiled programs. They can retain everything from Textile management to HR or

¹¹ [Fekis – Föreningen Företagsekonomi i Sverige](#)

¹² An academic professional degree established by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education in 2007 that comprises of 4 year of studies (240 ECTS).

international profile. This high percentage (54,9) of profiled programs raises questions on validity since this study focuses on the traditional programs (25,6%). But if you instead count for the number of student seats the ratio is different: Profiled programs: 34,4% Traditional programs: 46,2%. Meaning that close to 50% of all students study a traditional BA program.

For the nine university colleges selected for this study there are 34 programs that offer a bachelor's degree in Business and Economy as shown by table 3. All of them have at least one traditional program. (By this definition Skövde has 6) and in seats these program counts 49%, slightly higher than on national level. But there is a split where Borås UC (HIB) shows a strong focus on profiled programs in their portfolio. This distinction affects the percentage of traditional program seats offered for the group of UCs.

Table 3. A summary of Programs and seats offered complemented by student mobility for the academic year 2018/19. In Business and Economics at the UCs selected for the study.

Name	Abbreviation	Seats offered in the subject of Economy	Number of programs offered in the subject of Economy	Seats offered in BA Bachelor's program (traditional)	BA program (traditional) percentage of total seats in the subject	Student mobility within Erasmus program 2018/19 where the subject is Economy
University of Borås	HIB	321	7	40	12,5%	1
Dalarna University	DU	140	2	70	50%	1
Halmstad University	HH	455	4	120	26%	6
University of Gävle	HIG	370	2	260	70%	12
Kristianstad University	HKR	355	1	180	51%	13
Skövde University	HIS	180	6	180	100%	6
University West	HV	90	1	90	100%	3
Mälardalen University Sweden	MDH	370	3	210	57%	63
Södertörn University	SH	410	8	160	39%	16
		2691 Total	34 Total	1310 Total	49% Average	121 Total

International mobility at the UCs.

To understand the mobility rate among students on program level three main concerns needs to be addressed.

1. The present statistics available by UHR only shows mobility done within the Erasmus program. There is no national statistics on exchange mobility on program level outside the funding programs (Erasmus or different regional or national initiatives) of if the mobility was shorter than 12 weeks (The Erasmus limit). These students are commonly called free-movers.

2. The national statistic does not capture the mobility within a certain cohort of students. There is no viable way to tie mobilities from a certain academic year to the cohort of the same year. At least not within the limits of this study.

3. The statistics on mobility provided by UHR is structured in accordance with the ISCED coding system¹³. This implies mobilities within the subject Economy in a broader sense.

With these concerns accounted for the statistics is best viewed as indications rather than factual. On closer inspection the high mobility number at MDH (63) can be connected to the International profiled program at that institution. The aggregated level of mobility in the subject Economy at the UCs in the study is 4,4%. For the whole sector it is 7,4% (545 students).

Curriculums.

A first readthrough of the curriculums gave the insight that although the UCs are free to formulate/design the document as they see fit within the boundaries of the legal provisions, they are surprisingly similar. This leads to conclude that A: it is a quite polished document, developed by experienced people and evolved over a long period of time. And B: it is close at hand to assume that 'benchmarking' or looking how others are doing is common within the trade. A quick comparison with curriculums from other institutions, more traditionally research based, like Gothenburg University¹⁴ and Örebro University¹⁵ appears to support this as no major distinctions can be made. But for validity reason more institutions can be examined to scientifically establish this.

Structurally the documents follow a similar general construction:

Aim of the program, - Program specific aim, - Structure and Content, - Eligibility, - Degree awarded, - Quality assurance - Evaluation and revision and/or - Additional information. All UCs but one. HVs structure is completely different compared to the rest. From a document head section where general information and dates of validity is presented, it proceeds to present the courses available to study structured by year. Not at all the general construction the others show. From the interviews in the next section, it was learnt that program curriculums are updated yearly by the collegial governance. The process for this update is generally decided by management governance structure as part of a quality assurance system.

In a governance perspective the curriculum document is of high relevance for the students. It is the foundation for the structure and content of the education which he/she are committed to and starting point for the legally established student right to influence. As such its pertinence for the multi-actor dimension, defining students as an internal actor of governance, is established. It also mentions the

¹³ ISCED is the reference international classification for organizing education programs and related qualifications by levels and fields. ISCED 2011 (levels of education) has been implemented in all EU data collections since 2014. ISCED-F 2013 (fields of education and training) has been implemented since 2016. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/International_Standard_Classification_of_Education_\(ISCED\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/International_Standard_Classification_of_Education_(ISCED))

¹⁴ <https://www.gu.se/sites/default/files/2020-08/S1EKA%20svenska.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://api.oru.se/oruapi/v1/utbildningsinformation/utbildning/SEK1K?typ=program&accept=html&revision=3.000&termin=20212&sprak=sv>

influence of local business and trade but much less distinctive than the student ditto and not in all 9 documents of this study. Similarly, it is a basis for resource allocation based on the content in terms of courses and subjects. These decisions are made by collegial governance processes which is responsible for the program. As such the multi-level dimension is present. Resources are allocated by managerial structured governance. Authority and responsibility can be delegated but the chain of command implies levels and complexed interconnections between hierarchy and collegial governance. Also, the documents legal status, its existence originates from Swedish national law, can define it as a multi-level governance instrument. The result is more unclear in terms of whether a curriculum can constitute a multi-issue governance instrument. In some cases, the international dimension, sustainable development issues are mentioned but not in all the curriculums examined and certainly not in an elaborative way.

Aim of the program. In some cases, defined as “overall” or “general”. These are in line with, or sometimes directly copied from the legal provisions, specifically paragraph 8 of the Swedish higher education act¹⁶:

Education at the undergraduate level shall develop the students:

- ability to make independent and critical assessments,
- ability to independently distinguish, formulate and solve problems, and
- readiness to face changes in working life.

In the subject area to which the program relates, the students must, in addition to knowledge and skills, develop the ability to

- seek and evaluate knowledge at a scientific level,
- follow the development of knowledge, and
- exchange knowledge even with people without special knowledge in the field. Lag (2009: 1037).

Next section focuses on the more **specific program aims**, in some cases defined as ‘degree goals’ or ‘program goals’. The structure in this section is aligned in similar explanatory terminology typically: *knowledge and comprehension. Skills and abilities. Valuation abilities and ‘how to relate’*. Under this section DU has enunciated the four different issues from the higher education act – Sustainable development, internationalization, equality, and diversity.

After this follows a section typically named ‘**structure and/or content**’. This is where the program content – courses included – and how they are aligned to each other, is explained. (A program contains of a number of courses compiled in a program structure). The different specializations (as a student you can typically choose from a number of different specializations – auditing, management, or marketing for example) are defined, and it is explained how specific requirements as such given by the Swedish inspectorate of auditors authorization for example. In this section most UC formulate how students can be affected by or utilize the different issues at play.

6 curriculums expressed the students right to an international dimension in their education. In some cases, by referring to mobility options available and in others contemplating about internationalization in a broader sense. “Internationalization is an important part of the program”.

¹⁶ https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/hogskolelag-19921434_sfs-1992-1434

2 documents held a text connected to the employability issue, in one case explicitly local, or regional business and trade is mentioned. Diversity and sustainability are not mentioned in any curriculum in the content/structure section. Hypothetically these issues occur more in specific course syllabuses but no effort to investigate this further has been made.

The eligibility and degree awarded section are deemed less important for this study so no further analyze has been done.

The **Quality assurance** section explains the follow-up system, the student influence, and the eventual presence of a program council (and in that case also mentioning influence from local business and trade) to various detail and as this section is how ever only present in 4 curriculums out of 9 so the result is fuzzy at best. Other empirical data from the interviews made indicate that quite a lot of work goes into the follow-up tasks and ensuring the student perspective. It is however not distinctly shown to large extent in this type of document. At least not across the board.

Interviews.

Following the structure sent to the interviewees in advance (See Appendix 2) they were asked to introduce themselves and state their background and experience of the PMs role. There was three men and two women who participated. Three presented themselves coming from an academic background and two held a position as senior lecturer/assistant professor while the third had put the dissertation work on hold. The two remaining held a professional background where one came from the private sector and the other from a public authority. In these roles these two had more than 20 years' experience. As PMs three of them claimed less experience as they been appointed less than two years ago. The other two had experience (more than two years) and one came from a background higher up in the managerial structure of the UC. In this context the role appears to be inconstant with high number of relocations, but such conclusions need more pervasive research to determine.

Analysis in the framing of levels, actors, and issues.

Starting with Section 5. Focusing in on Internationalization.

In the introductory letter to the interview (as well as in the interview structure) it was implied that special attention to Internationalization tasks were of interest for the study and most of the PMs had prepared by controlling mobility numbers among students and agreements of international exchange. When brought up, they all to varying degrees reported delegated responsibility for internationalization to a teacher or departmental coordinator within the academic community for example. Also, the support structure of a central administration department (an international office) was mentioned as a driving force. All PMs emphasized the international dimension as an important feature of the program. Mobility is prioritized, most commonly in the fourth or fifth semester where it is organized elective courses. Those can more easily be replaced and acknowledged in a BA bachelor's degree. One UC reported an agreement with a French partner UC on a double degree. Meaning that the students can study their last year at this partner institution and get a degree from both. When asked to reflect on the mobility rate among students it varied a lot among the interviewees as to why it appears as it does. Some statements are: "It is difficult to squeeze in a mobility in a three-year program". "The biggest

cohort is studying the auditing specialization and are not interested in an international career". Summarily the result was thin for the PM role.

Moving on to the rest of the sections as presented in the interview structure, thus starting with section 2. Levels.

To summarize, the multi-level dimension is predominant in *governance of resources, preconditions, and structure* of the program. *Resources* is in this case relating to time. It can be teaching hours or administrative hours. In the interview situation the PMs were asked to reflect on their role and the allocation of resources. Here a distinct split in the governance structure come into view. On one hand the managerial linear governance of hierarchy within the institution. On the other hand, the collegial structure. Within in the institution the resources follow the managerial line of command. The PM answer to a division leader who answer to a head of department, a prefect, or head of an academy. The resources are distributed through this line and are originated from the yearly budgetary conditions all publicly funded institutions receive from the government. Summarily the government tell the higher education institution how many students it shall 'produce'. Here it is called for mentioning the autonomy of higher institutions in Sweden is considered medium in that sense according to the EUA ranking of autonomy¹⁷. Here in the meaning that the UCs management can distribute the resources relatively freely and start or close down programs as they see fit.

This was as far the discussion went with the managers. Their influence on resource governance were limited for the role. As an example: If a new subject specialization were to be implemented (and thus more students) the program manager had no authority but to ask the next level in command to allocate means that are available. A decision that often implied less resources to another subject or program. The PM can advocate but not decide. But also, in a collegial governance perspective there is reason to reflect over levels. A PM is in most cases responsible for a program council. It comprises of the teachers and key administrative staff, student representation and in two cases representatives from the local business and industry. How it is organized and how often the council presides differ among the five UCs, but the responsibility of the entity is related to quality. It does follow-ups on courses and results. In four cases it is complemented by a subject council where the teachers discuss academic issues on program level. Also stemming from a quality perspective. From the interviews this division is fuzzy. There are among the UCs differences in how its organized, what issues are discussed at the different councils etc. There is also a large variety in the responsibility of the PMs when it comes to the program and subject councils. In some cases, the council can be described as the PMs tool for program development. In other cases, the PM viewed it as a control function of his/her performance. On the level above one find an education, or education and research council (ERC). This was the case for all UCs. It is the ERC that is overall responsible for quality at the institution. For example, if you want to do changes on a program *structure* the ERC have the final say if it favors such a change. Often based on academic resources available. As such these two governing principles, managerial and collegial needs to interact to create favorable *preconditions* for the program. But there was a variety in the comprehension of such conditions among the PMs. In a national perspective the level dimension can relate to the legal provisions of Higher education act and ordinance. For this level governance factor no PM expressed any direct relevance for the role. From the legal provisions the level linkage is more

¹⁷ <https://www.university-autonomy.eu/>

visual in the curriculum documentation. It also became clear that neither the EU level governance were a part of the PMs responsibilities as none of them recognized the Bologna process to be part of the governance agenda at program councils or equivalent.

Section 3. Actors.

Moving on to discussing the multi-actor dimension the PMs all referred to the student representation and local business and industry representatives in program councils for example. They all expressed the role to have a lot of student contact which strengthen the assumption that the PM role is connected to responsibility and authority in the student – institution relation. The distinction between the two as internal and external actors is of relevance. Both are examples of direct influence that are proclaimed by Swedish law¹⁸ and in this respect not exclusive for neither the UCs nor the subject area on national level. The student influence in particular have a long tradition in Swedish higher education history. To what extent the influence can be of relevance on program is more difficult to conclude from the interviews. It's not implied to what extent the students or external representatives influence program design and content. But rather that student influence is more direct and predominant on course level evaluation but not so much in program level. The same goes for the business and industry representation. In some cases, it has a prominent position at the council meeting. In one case for example the representatives were changed over a two-year period on the account that there has to be new influences coming in. "The impact a business and industry representative have stagnates over time". This was however not the case at all UCs. Some toned down its relevance.

The PMs are more detailed when it comes to the collegial impact. The composition of the teachers involved are highly influential on content and design. The competence, or field of expertise you bring to the table affect which courses that are given precedence.

From the first interview the influence gained from academics outside the institution was highlighted. The collegium is to large extent members of the FEKIS association and current trends, and topics are often discussed at the annual national conference. It was also used for benchmarking how other UCs construct their program. The PMs all held it to be a predominant external source of influence.

In the interviews the question of quality assurance (QA) as a governing factor were addressed. All PMs but one highlighted the internal QA system as a highly influential factor as it were here the yearly program evaluation was executed and presented for higher governance level, the ERC. The authority of the ERC is governed by law (Higher Education Act,1992:1434) 6§: 'Decisions shall be made by persons with scientific or artistic competence if the decisions require an assessment of 1. organization, implementation or quality of education, or 2. organization of or quality of research'

This implies strong indication for the multi-actor dimension of internal governance if you assume the ERC consists of colleagues from different subjects and disciplines, (but also as a dimension governed by higher level of authority). Building on that is the Swedish national Quality Assurance system which

¹⁸ Swedish higher education act 1992:1434)

- Students shall have the right to exercise influence over the education at the universities. 2§
- The task of the higher education institutions must include collaborating with the surrounding society for mutual exchange and working to ensure that the knowledge and competence that exists at the higher education institution benefits society. 4§

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/hogskolelag-19921434_sfs-1992-1434

is the responsibility of the Swedish higher education authority, UKÄ¹⁹. And as such the Swedish QA system meets the requirements set out in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area ESG)²⁰ UKÄ also recently became member of the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA)²¹. An association tied to the Bologna Process signatory countries. Not only are the programs evaluated on academic quality, UKÄ also perform thematic evaluations on specific themes. In 2017 the higher education institutions work with sustainable development was evaluated for example. If you define ENQA as an external actor with governance influence the implications of quality assurance constitute a hub for interconnected -level, -actor and -issue governance with high impact on local program level cannot be unstated. The marketization aspect – in this context related to the process of implementing tuition fees for students coming from outside the EU. This was a government decision (Prop. 2009/10:65). The PMs had not input of relevance as to whether market-based decisions had any impact on the bachelors program although familiar with the concept from master level programs being offered under these conditions.

Sector 4. Issues.

In discussing the multi-issue dimension, the PMs was introduced to the concepts hard and soft governance on local level. This distinction stems from the terms often used to describe EU governance where hard governance is based in legal provisions such as treaties, non-negotiable rules of the union. As opposed to soft governance mechanisms such as policies and agendas for the purpose of pushing development towards a more harmonious Europe. In a local setting like this it was implied by the interview structure that hard governance within the institution were tied to resources, staff allocation and student cohort size. A governing aspect of which a PM has no authority according to all the interviewees. As such it connects more to the multi-level dimension. Soft governance on the other hand constitutes of academic progress and strategies, policies or plans often themed towards a certain issue (internationalization, inclusion, sustainability etc.). From a PMs perspective this type of governance was more unclear when it comes to responsibility. They all stated that putting focus on a specific issue must be triggered by an assignment to initiate. It doesn't happen spontaneously. They all recognized sustainable development as being a dominating issue at the moment. It has assignation from higher level within the UC and beyond. And from the recent QA themed evaluation by UKÄ²². But also, as a theme for the 2019 annual FEKIS conference connecting the issue to both level and actor dimension. And just to highlight a key aspect. The academic content in the program was the responsibility of the collegium collectively rather than one PM. Employability was highlighted by all as an important issue that were constantly in question. A token of the UCs placement and role in the Swedish higher education landscape.

¹⁹ <https://english.uka.se/>

²⁰ https://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/72/7/European_Standards_and_Guidelines_for_Quality_Assurance_in_the_EHEA_2015_MC_613727.pdf

²¹ <https://www.enqa.eu/>

²² <https://www.uka.se/publikationer--beslut/publikationer--beslut/beslut-tematiska-utvarderingar/tematiska-utvarderingar/2017-10-02-utvardering-av-arbetet-med-att-framja-hallbar-utveckling.html>

Conclusions.

This study has tried put focus on how the distance between the EU and local operational level distorts the aim. By departing from an issue taken from my everyday professional life - low mobility rates among students and theoretically conceptualize it, place it in a context and study it.

By zooming in on governance mechanisms closely linked to the UC – student relationship such as program curriculums and the role and responsibilities of the program manager, the goal has been to determine whether conflicting aims stemming from multi levels, actors and issues have an inhibitory effect on the international dimension the students are entitled to in their education.

The results indicate that such an effect exists as the theoretical connection to MLG framed by the three dimensions turns out to work well in order to explain the conditions for program governance. It seems to confirm the hypothesis made in the introductory chapter, *higher education governance mechanisms that are situated close to the students gets distorted by these multi -levels, -actors and - issues. Which have an inhibitory effect on international mobility among students.* However, as debated by Vukasovic, Jungblut, Chou, Elken, & Ravinet (2018) although the MLG theory can be stretched to fit the purpose of explaining local governance mechanisms, in this setting the multi-dimensions get tangled up in each other making it difficult to keep a clear and crisp contextualisation throughout the analysis. It is easy to fall back and allow other governing principles such as collegial and managerial governance emerge and gain explanatory precedence.

There is a large debate on the legitimacy of the European Union, whether it can be solely grounded in ‘output legitimacy’ (effectiveness, responsiveness) or it must also be grounded in ‘input legitimacy’ (participation, representation). This raises normative questions regarding decisions made through MLG processes according to Piattoni (2009). This study indicates that the push-motivation to implement policies weakens the further down the level structure. It is contradictory to the principle of subsidiarity which places decisions as close as possible to the citizens and ensures that that action at European Union level is justified considering the possibilities available at national, regional, or local level. If this can relate solely to the level dimension or is the actor and issue dimension distorting the aim? I argue that this study indicates such a cause. The conflict of aims in a context of two opposite governance principles – managerial and collegial governance makes the authority and responsibility issues diffuse without a quality assurance system that takes responsibility for all the entireties. As a follow-up study it can be of relevance to examine to what extent the QA systems take accountability for the non-academic related aspects of the education.

Circling back to the research questions from the introductory chapter:

-How are the conditions for internationalization framed in the program governance document Curriculum?

-What role does the program manager play to secure that all students enrolled receive an international dimension during the course of a study program?

This study shows that the conditions for internationalization in curriculums can be defined as fragmental at best. In some cases, it is clearly worded and in others it is not mentioned at all. A larger selection – stretching to other subject areas and institution might be relevant to draw any further conclusions. The program manager has responsibilities but lack the authority. The role is a position with assumably high staff turnover. The insights in governance mechanisms are limited for the role. “I see myself as a caretaker of the program. It is the joint responsibility of the academic teachers

rather than the PM". A statement that leads me to the insight that the collegium is less capable to singlehanded be liable for issues related to the social cohesion aspects of the education.

As such this study can be viewed as a first step to increase the understanding of governance dimensions impact on internationalisation. The empirical units selected, program managers and curriculums, are arguably insufficient to draw any conclusions with wider implications. More research is needed. And ending this study conclusively – The governance mechanisms – collegial and managerial, needs to be aligned to create favourable conditions for student mobility and internationalization. In practice, it must be an expressed responsibility of the collegium, supported by a managerial system of incentives and consequences – the carrot and the whip. Which is monitored by a quality assurance system based in measurable goals and performance management. That is the key.

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University West – www.hv.se

Mälardalen University Sweden – www.mdh.se

Södertörn University – www.sh.se

Appendix 1 - Statistical tables on mobility.

Table 1.

Outbound mobility funded by Erasmus+ per country 2018.

(Program country means countries participating in the Erasmus+ program. Partner country means almost all other countries in the world (simplified))

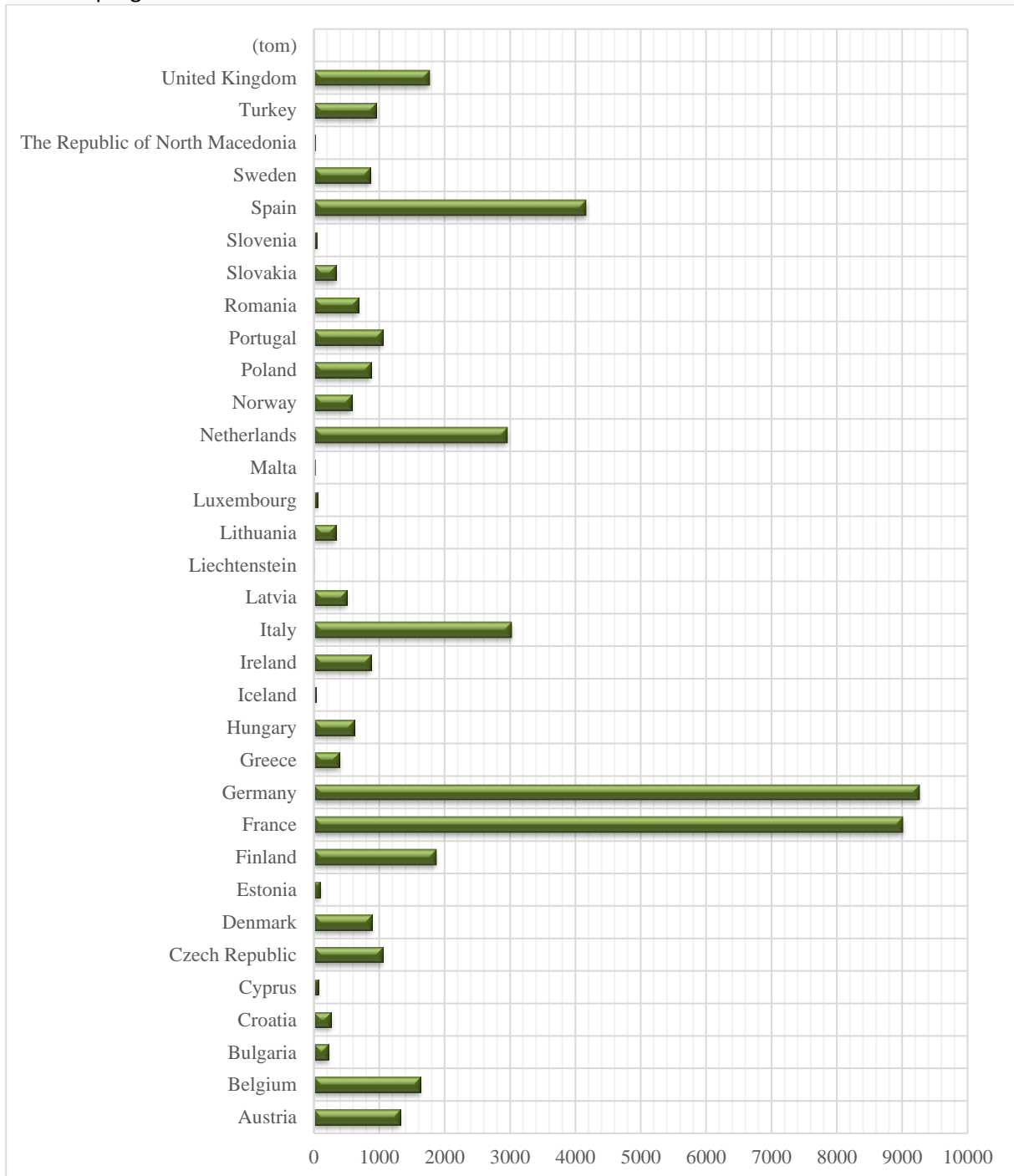
Country/Region	From the country/region to Programme Countries	From the country to Partner Countries	Total
Austria	8 818	378	9 196
Belgium	11 475	203	11 678
Bulgaria	4 591	211	4 802
Croatia	2 877	240	3 117
Cyprus	918	52	970
Czechia	10 800	352	11 152
Denmark	5 167	154	5 321
Estonia	2 017	196	2 213
Finland	8 078	205	8 283
France	51 168	1 001	52 169
Germany	48 379	1 597	49 976
Greece	7 093	400	7 493
Hungary	6 822	444	7 266
Iceland	539	64	603
Ireland	4 025	135	4 160
Italy	41 862	933	42 795
Latvia	3 508	175	3 683
Liechtenstein	67	11	78
Lithuania	6 261	456	6 717
Luxembourg	586	24	610
Malta	559	27	586
Netherlands	15 977	305	16 282
North Macedonia	503	4	507
Norway	3 506	113	3 619
Poland	23 466	1 416	24 882
Portugal	12 185	527	12 712
Romania	12 322	1 023	13 345
Slovakia	6 019	253	6 272
Slovenia	3 069	163	3 232
Spain	46 309	1 077	47 386
Sweden	5 818	186	6 004
Turkey	20 528	674	21 202
United Kingdom	19 842	645	20 487
Total for programme countries	395 154	13 644	408 798

The information is drawn from the Erasmus+ annual report (2018).

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7985705e-41b7-11ea-9099-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

Table 2.

Outbound Erasmus funded mobility in the subject of Business and Economics 2018. Divided by country. It entails both study exchange and practice placements. The two activities available in the Erasmus program.

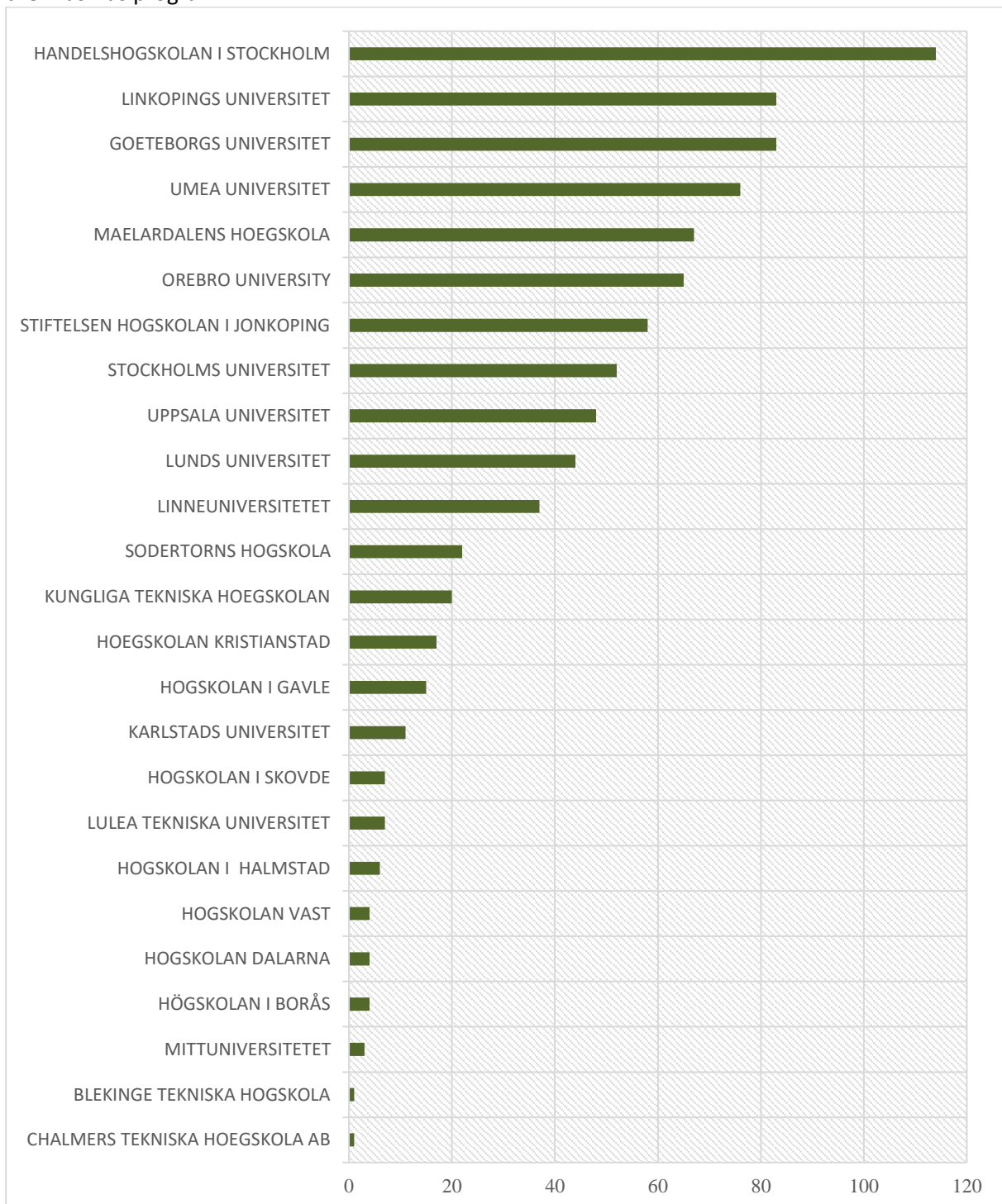


The information is drawn from the Erasmus+ annual report (2018).

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7985705e-41b7-11ea-9099-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

Table 3

Outgoing student Erasmus mobility 2018/19 in Business and Economics divided by higher education institutions. It entails both study exchange and practice placements. The two activities available in the Erasmus program.



The information was received by contacting UHR which is the national agency of Sweden for the Erasmus program. It provided the statistical material which then was transformed into this diagram.

Appendix 2 – Introductory letter to interviewees.

Introduction letter



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN STUDIES (CES)

Hello!

My name is Carl-Fredrik Miles and I am studying at the University of Gothenburg, Executive master in European Studies. I am now writing my master's thesis on different dimensions of leadership and responsibility at Swedish universities linked to EEA - European Education Area. Specifically, how these dimensions relate to the implementation of the Bologna process's distinctive features and mobility within the Erasmus + program. I therefore turn to you as program manager for the economics program at the University of Borås.

I am looking for someone in your position to interview as your role can involve insights and experiences about values and underlying processes that are very valuable for my study, as it will constitute the analysis material. The economics programs at Swedish universities are suitable analysis units for me as content and structure are comparable.

Participation in the study is therefore extremely important and I would like an interview that is about 60 minutes long to be recorded. The interview is conducted in Swedish (unless the interviewee prefers English) and I consider it necessary to record in order to be able to translate with good quality. The identity of the interviewee will be anonymized and will only be referred to as the “program manager” and some characteristics of the university's location (large city, small town, etc.). However, it cannot be ruled out that experienced persons can identify the interviewees upon further investigation.

I hope with the study to increase the understanding of how different dimensions of responsibility and leadership can affect the work with the Erasmus + program and further insight into how the EU can influence the work at universities. The interviewee does not need to prepare anything for the interview. I will, for example, ask about the role, how tasks relate to the program, how the work is linked to local, national, and European rules, how the work with industry councils and influences of the local business community affects content, etc.

A more detailed structure for the interview will be sent out in connection with an appointment.

I would appreciate very much if there is an opportunity to participate in my study. I am flexible according to your opportunity to participate and adapt accordingly. The interviews take place via Zoom.

If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact me and I will be happy to get back to you! If contact is desired with my supervisor Professor Mats Andrén by e-mail: mats.andren@gu.se

Many thanks in advance.

Sincerely,

Carl-Fredrik Miles, Executive Master in European Studies, Department of Political Science, Center for European Studies at the University of Gothenburg carl-fredrik.miles@hv.se, 0733-975033

Swedish version

Hej

Jag heter Carl-Fredrik Miles och studerar vid Göteborgs Universitet, Executive master in European Studies. Jag skriver nu min masteruppsats om olika dimensioner i ledarskap och ansvar vid svenska högskolor kopplat till EEA – European Education Area. Specifikt hur dessa dimensioner förhåller sig till implementeringen av Bologna processens utmärkande egenskaper och mobilitet inom Erasmus+ programmet. Jag vänder mig därför till dig som programansvarig för ekonomprogrammet vid högskolan i **Borås**.

Jag eftersöker nämligen någon i din position att intervjua då din roll kan innebära insikter och erfarenheter om värderingar och underliggande processer som är väldigt värdefulla för min studie, då det kommer att utgöra analysmaterialet. Ekonomprogrammen vid svenska högskolor är för mig lämpliga analysenheter då innehåll och struktur är jämförbara.

Medverkan i studien är alltså oerhört betydelsefull och jag skulle önska en cirka 60 minuter lång intervju som spelas in. Intervjun genomförs på svenska (om inte intervjupersonen föredrar engelska) och jag bedömer det nödvändigt att spela in för att kunna översätta med god kvalitet. Identiteten på intervjupersonen kommer att vara anonymiserad och endast refereras som "program manager" och några kännetecken om lärosätets placering (storstad, mindre stad etc.). Det går dock inte att utesluta att insatta personer kan identifiera intervjupersonerna vid närmare efterforskning.

Jag hoppas med studien att öka förståelsen för hur olika dimensioner av ansvar och ledarskap kan påverka arbetet med Erasmus+ programmet och vidare insyn till hur EU kan påverka arbetet vid högskolor. Intervjupersonen behöver inte förbereda något till intervjun. Jag kommer till exempel fråga om rollen, hur arbetsuppgifter relaterar till programmet, hur arbetet är kopplat till lokala, nationella och europeiska regler, hur arbetet med branschråd och influenser av det lokala näringslivet påverkar innehåll etc. En mer detaljerad struktur för intervjun skickas ut i samband med tidsbokning.

Jag skulle uppskatta väldigt mycket om möjlighet finns att delta i min studie. Jag är flexibel efter din möjlighet att delta och anpassar mig efter det. Intervjuerna sker via Zoom.

Om du har ytterligare frågor, tveka inte att kontakta mig och jag återkommer gärna! Om kontakt önskas med min handledare professor Mats Andrén på e-post: mats.andren@gu.se

Stort tack på förhand och på återhörande.

Mvh,

Carl-Fredrik Miles

Executive Master in European Studies, statsvetenskapliga institutionen, Centrum för Europastudier vid Göteborgs universitet

carl-fredrik.miles@hv.se

0733-975033

Appendix 3 – Interview guide.

Interview guide.

Universitet och högskolor förväntas uppfylla en mängd olika mål och önskemål från externa och interna intressenter. Målkonflikter är därför väldigt vanligt förekommande. Intervjun är därför tänkt att fokusera på ledningsfrågor kopplade till utbildningsprogrammet och det är dig som programansvarig lärares *uppfattning* om rådande förhållande som är av intresse snarare än att faktainhämtning. Det är inte en jämförande studie i den meningen. Eftersom det är en uppsats inom Europastudier kommer särskild vikt ligga på internationalisering.

Här nedan är den struktur jag tänkt mig för intervjun i form av stolpar (även om det är på engelska här kommer intervjun hållas på svenska).

Om du har några frågor är det bara att höra av sig.

Mvh/ Carl-Fredrik

Section 1: Background information

Interviewee: Name, Position/role (regulations?)/experience of this position/Participated in Mobility (Y/N)

Program information:

Program/Syllabus

History and structure

Specializations

Section 2: Multi level Governance

Program council – how often – who participates – how is change implemented (syllabus).

Hard governance (resources/visions/strategies)

Soft governance (Policy – advisory)

Department level management governance

University level governance

National level governance

EU level governance

Section 3: Multi actor Governance

External: Industry council
Student union
Accreditation
Other institutions

Internal: Collegial
New public management

Section 4: Multi issue Governance

Employability
Sustainable development
Equality and Norms

Section 5: Internationalization

The Bologna process – Grades – Mobility – Internationalization at home