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Dr. Gyða Jóhannsdóttir
Associate professor
Iceland University of Education
e-mail: gydaj@hi.is

Academic drift in the development of the education of Nordic primary school teachers.

It is well known that higher education has expanded during the last decades in most countries. The upgrading of former occupational education to university is an important factor leading to the overall expansion. Education for primary school teachers is one of a former non-university educational programs that have in some countries been upgraded to university such as in US and UK. The tendency to transfer former occupational non-university education to university level has been referred to as *academic drift*, i.e. the tendency of usually non-university institutions to copy more prestigious institutions, i.e. universities (Morwhew, 2000, p. 56).

In this paper I will account for a comparative study of the development of the education for Nordic primary school teachers (hereafter referred to as teacher education) within Nordic systems of higher education. The development of Nordic teacher education is explored within the framework of academic drift, which refers to whether this education has been moved from institutions that are far from the universities to institutions that are closer to the universities or if it has even been transferred to universities.

I found it interesting to explore the development of this teacher education in the Nordic countries given the similar socio- cultural and political context. The Nordic languages are of the same origin except Finnish. The Nordic countries have for a long time shared similar ideas on teaching and learning which is reflected in Nordic collaboration on educational matters. Therefore a similar development of teacher education might be expected in these countries.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The concept academic drift is seen as an overarching concept including several different but related categories. Firstly there is *system drift* referring to system changes within higher education, i.e. when a system changes from being quite far from universities to a system that is closer to the universities than before; here the state is an important actor (Neave, 1979; Jónasson, 2004a; Jóhannsdóttir, 2006a). Secondly there is *institutional drift* which means the tendency of non-university institutions to move closer to the traditional universities, the institutions are important actors. Institutional drift also includes the tendency of faculty and department or teachers of non-university institutions to adopt academic values. Recruitment of new teachers is increasingly based on higher university degrees and academic merits and faculty members prioritize research and

publication in scientific journals (Kyvik, 2004; Jónasson, 2004a; Jóhannsdóttir, 2006a). Thirdly there is the *drift of the student body* referring “to a student population that tends to choose academic-based programs in preference to vocationally based programs” (Jónasson, 2004a, p. 276). Here the student body or clients are the main actors. Students are an important actor and Jónasson suggests that the students’ aspiration for degree programs is the most important factor leading to system and institutional drift.

The academic drift, especially system and institutional drift relates to the organization of higher education systems. Different countries organize their higher education systems differently. Scott (1995) a policy analyst, came up with a typology on the structure of higher education. Kyvik (2004) has elaborated on Scott’s typology. The typology comprises the following five systems:

- *University –dominated systems.* Higher education consists of traditional universities and a very few specialized colleges. Other institutions are part of the secondary school system (education for teachers, nurses and engineers). This system characterized Europe until the beginning of the 1960s.
- *Dual systems.* This system includes the traditional universities but also other institutions that are definitely post-secondary school institutions such as colleges. These institutions are numerous, small and specialized. They offer two to three-year vocational programs leading to a diploma, have their own culture and regulations and have strong ties to vocational practice. The relation between these institutions within the region is weak. The completion of their study programs does not lead to admission to universities except in very limited cases. Even so, the need for coordination with the university is identified. This system was quite frequent during the sixties and seventies.
- *Binary Systems.* Two parallel higher education systems exist. First, the traditional universities, second, alternative institutions such as polytechnics or a college sector. The former small, specialized and different colleges are now merged into centers of many institutions with common regulation. These centers are also related to the region and community and serve local needs. Research if any should be applied. The universities are responsible for basic research and research training. Rivalry often exists between these two sectors of higher education. Both Scott (1995) and Kyvik (2004) agree that the difference between a dual system and binary system can be quite blurred.
- *Unified systems* refer to a comprehensive higher educational system including all institutions of higher education. The same nomenclature (usually university) applies to all institutions. The institutions are not formally differentiated. Still there may remain some differences in status and reputations most often regarding research.
- *Stratified systems* Higher education is seen as a total system. Even so, the institutions are differentiated both internally and externally. This differentiation can be related to politics or the market. This system is mostly found in the USA.

The main limitation of Scott’s typology is that it is a categorization of existing different higher education systems in different countries based on different cultural, political and educational contexts. Scott (1995) warns that the typology is therefore, somewhat

simplistic as it cannot encompass all these cultural differences. I claim that Scott's typology reflects system drift, which is for example if a higher education system moves from a system far from the university to a system closer to the university such as from a dual system to binary or unified system.

It should be clear from the above that the development of Nordic teacher education is closely related to the development of Nordic higher education, i.e. institutions of teacher education are placed within institutions of higher education systems. These institutions can be universities or non-university institutions which might be moving towards university, and obtain some of its characteristics, i.e. reflecting institutional drift. The main focus of this study is to examine the occurrence of institutional drift. It is therefore necessary to come up with criteria to detect it. These criteria relate to characteristics of a university. First there are rules and regulations about research – are teacher educators in non-university institutions supposed to carry out research? Secondly, do teacher education programs lead to university degree? These criteria are based on Neave's (1979) and Halsey (1983) research but their results revealed that teachers in non-university institutions begin to carry out research and non-university study-programs begin to lead to university degree. From this I derived additional criteria, i.e. description of university titles, i.e. whether non-university institutions use university titles and descriptions of individual and institutional promotion systems, i.e. can faculty members apply for higher university titles and can institutions apply for partly and full university status?

The main questions of the study are based on two notions: On the one hand there is the notion that the overall development of both higher education systems and the institutions within the systems grows in some respect out of cultural and educational context. On the other hand there is close relationship between the development of higher education systems according to Scott's typology and institutional drift in the development of teacher education. The questions are:

- 1) Is there a Nordic model of the development of Nordic teacher education?
- 2) Does the development of Nordic teacher education reflect institutional drift?

METHOD

The main methods used in the study are documentary analysis and interviews with key persons. Official documents from the Nordic countries such as legislation, regulations and reports on higher education and teacher education are analyzed. The first data were gathered during visits to all the countries from late October until December 2001. A follow up on these data was carried out in spring 2003 and 2004 and followed since then.

In order to understand the foreign documents it was necessary to carry out interviews with selected persons. The interviews were also valuable as my interviewees suggested more specialized material. Interviews were carried out with at least four persons in each country. The interviewees were for example from the Ministry of Education, an association of university teachers or associations of teachers from a relevant non-university institution. The interviews were semi-structured and their duration was approximately 1-1.5 hours.

Scott's (1995) typology of systems of higher education is used to classify the organization of Nordic higher education systems as well as Kyviks's (2004) elaboration of Scott's typology, where he classifies the organization of higher education in several

countries included the Nordic countries (Iceland excluded). In this study the system of higher education in Iceland is classified according to Scott's typology. Even if the typology is somewhat simplistic as already mentioned it is, however, a useful descriptive tool as it shows the broad picture and allows a comparison of changes in higher education over time and the direction of the changes.

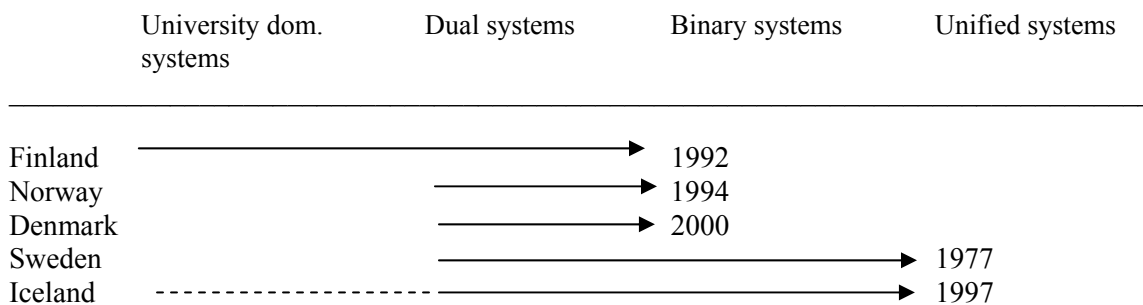
Four criteria are used to detect institutional drift. 1) Rules and regulations about research, i.e. whether teachers in non-university institutions shall carry out research. II) Classification of final examinations i.e. do study-programs lead to university degree or not? III) University titles. IV) individual and institutional promotion system.

RESULTS

The structure of Nordic higher education

As Nordic teacher education is placed within system of higher education it is necessary to account briefly for the organization and development of Nordic higher education systems before analyzing institutional drift in teacher education. Figure I below shows the results of the analysis of the organization of Nordic higher education systems.

Figure I. The classification of the organization of higher education in the Nordic countries showing when the change was made and from which system



(Gyða Jóhannsdóttir, 2006a)

Figure I reveals that the structure of higher education falls under two of Scott's systems, i.e. binary systems and unified systems. University-dominated systems and dual systems are not formally identified. The figure indicates that the development of the Nordic countries differs regarding time of change and also from which system the change occurs. It also shows an important similarity which is that the development in all the Nordic countries reflects system drift as the former systems move to a system closer to a university according to national policies.

The Finnish binary system consists of a university sector and a non-university sector, i.e. polytechnics (f. *AMK*), which was established in 1992 (Rinne, 2004). The two sectors of higher education fall under separate legislations and the polytechnics are separated from the universities.

The binary system in Norway consists of a university sector and a non-university sector, i.e. *university colleges* (*n. statliga højskoler*). The adoption of the binary system is traced back to the so called. college reform in 1994 when 98 colleges (there were two types of colleges; *professional colleges* and *regional colleges*) were merged into 26 university college centers. Since 1995 a common law comprises both universities and

university colleges (Lov om universiteter og højskoler, 1995). From 2005 two university colleges have been upgraded to universities.

The beginning of the Danish binary system is found in year 2000 when the Danish educational authorities encouraged the merger of four to five *colleges* (*d. seminars*) to centers of continuing education (*d. Centers for videregående uddannelse*) abbreviated *CVU* (Rasmussen, 2004). In 2007 a further merger took place through the adoption of a legislation on university colleges (*d. professionshøjskoler*). The legislation stipulated the merger of c.a. 20 CVUs and the remaining seminars into 8 university colleges (Lov om professionshøjskoler, 2007). The university colleges are separated from the universities.

Sweden moved to a unified system from a dual system in 1977 when they integrated colleges into universities if a university was situated nearby. The nomenclature for the unified system is *college system* (*s. högskolesystemet*). In 1977 the colleges did not have the status of a university as college teachers were supposed to teach and not to engage in research (Fritzell, 1998). This difference has decreased from 1992 as it is stipulated that all education offered within universities and university colleges shall be research based and teachers of both university and university colleges shall engage in research (Högskolelagen, 1992). The Swedish unified system includes both universities and university colleges which can be upgraded to universities if they fulfill certain requirements. Therefore the system has sometimes been referred to as a hidden binary system (Kyvik, 2004).

In Iceland the beginning of a unified system is demarcated by a legislation on universities from 1997. It has to be noted that the Icelandic university sector is quite young compared to the other Nordic countries. Until 1971 there existed only one Icelandic university, i.e. the University of Iceland formally established in 1911. In 1971 the College of Teacher Training, which was located at upper secondary level was transformed to a university, got university status and became the second university in the country.

Iceland has not had a formal post-secondary college sector as occupational/professional education has either been located within universities or upper secondary school level. During the eighties and nineties the university sector has expanded gradually as several non-university occupational education programs have either been integrated into the universities or former non-university institutions have been upgraded to universities. It is, however, stated here that Iceland has had a hidden dual system from the sixties and till the late nineties. This statement is based on the fact that a number of vocational schools, formally located within upper secondary school system, gradually began to move towards the universities in several aspects such as requiring matriculation examination as admission criteria, teachers beginning to engage in developmental activities etc. (Jóhannsdóttir, 2006a).

It is clear that the Nordic countries have organized their higher education differently. A Nordic model for the development of teacher education does not exist. However, system drift occurs in all the countries, i.e. the system has changed to a system that is closer to the universities than it was before.

Does the development of Nordic teacher education reveal institutional drift?

Table I below accounts for how the development of teacher education fulfills the criteria used to detect institutional drift.

Table I. An overview of the placement of teacher education within Nordic institutions of higher education and the occurrence of institutional drift in the development of this teacher education.

Finland	Iceland	Sweden	Norway	Denmark
Universities	Universities	Universities/univ. colleges	Univ. coll./ universities.	CVU/univ. colleges
Univ. titles	Univ. titles	Univ. titles	Univ. titles	No univ. titles
Research	Research	Research	Research	No research But developmental activities
Univ. degree	Univ. degree	Univ. degree	Univ. degree	No univ. degree
No promotion system	Promotion system	Promotion system	Promotion system	No promotion system

Table I shows that the Nordic countries place teacher education in different institutions. It is solely located within universities in Finland and Iceland and to a great extent in Sweden. In Norway it is mostly located within university colleges. It has, however to be noted that where university college have been upgraded to universities, teacher education is within universities. In Denmark it is solely within university colleges.

In order to span the dynamics of institutional drift, it is necessary to account for the development of teacher education and relate it to the development of higher education in each country during the last four decades or so.

In Finland teacher education was transferred to the universities in the mid-seventies when the university sector was expanded one-sidedly. From the beginning teacher educators got university titles, were supposed to carry out research and the educational program lead to university degree (Kivinen and Rinne, 1996) In the late seventies the Finns abolished Bachelors degree and adopted Masters degree as first university degree. The development of Finnish teacher education shows clear signs of institutional drift.

In Iceland, teacher education has been located within universities since 1971 or since the Icelandic College of Teacher Training was upgraded to university in 1971. Teacher educators got university titles, were supposed to carry out research and from the mid seventies the new educational program lead to B.Ed degree. Promotion system was authorized in 1981 (Jóhannsdóttir, 2001, 2006b). In 2008 a new legislation on the education and employment of teachers and school leaders stipulates that teachers at all school levels shall have Master degree (Lög um menntun og ráðningu kennara og skólustjórnenda, 2008). An early and clear institutional drift is found in the development of Icelandic teacher education.

Swedish teacher education is placed both within universities and university colleges. According to the educational reform from 1977 Swedish teacher education which had been offered in teacher colleges was integrated into universities if a university was nearby. In the beginning college teachers were only expected to teach and not expected to carry out research. This changed by the Act on college system from 1992 as all education offered by the universities and colleges (now referred to as university colleges) were supposed to be based on scientific ground and research; both university teachers and college teachers should have university titles and engage in research

(Högskolelagen, 1992). The university colleges can be authorized to offer Ph.D. programs and they can also be upgraded to universities if they fulfill certain requirements. Individual promotion system has existed since late 1990s. According to this, the development of Swedish teacher education reflects a clear institutional drift.

In Norway teacher education was transferred from professional colleges into university colleges according to the college reform from 1994. Now teacher education is therefore normally within university colleges except in the cases where university colleges have been upgraded to universities. Gradual institutional drift occurred rather early in Norway as the professional colleges operated parallel with the regional colleges which were supposed to offer short occupational education as well as some elementary courses usually offered by the universities which were overcrowded at the time. Teachers at both types of colleges were supposed to teach and not to engage in research, but this changed as the regional colleges became more academic than intended. Already in 1970 the educational authorities stated that some applied research related to local needs was required. This authorization was also valid for some of the professional colleges even if they did not become as academic as the regional colleges (Kyvik & Skodvin, 2003). Gradually teacher education colleges were authorized to grant graduate degree but not Ph.D degree (Kyvik, 2002). In 1993 a promotion system was established.

According to the legislation on colleges and universities from 1995 all teachers shall have university titles and engage in research. University colleges can be authorized to offer Ph.D programs and they can also be promoted to a university if certain requirements are fulfilled. A steady and strong institutional drift is detected in Norwegian teacher education.

During the 1960s Denmark teacher education was placed within teacher colleges (*d. lærer-seminarier*). From year 2000 it was mostly placed within CVUs and some remaining *seminars* (seminars which did not choose to merge into a CVU). From 2007 teacher education is placed within university colleges (*d. professionshøjskole*) which are the new non-university institutions in the Danish binary system. Both CVUs and university colleges are far from the universities and do not meet the criteria of university according to table I. Teacher educators (as other university college teachers) do not have university titles, are not supposed to engage in research (but shall engage in developmental activities). The study program does not lead to university degree but a *professional bachelor* is granted. University colleges can not be promoted to universities (Lov om professionshøjskoler, 2007).

At first glance one might conclude that there is almost a lack of institutional drift. A closer look reveals, however, some signs of drift but it is much slower than in the other Nordic countries. First of all there is the issue of research. Teacher educators were not authorized to engage in research but supposed to carry out developmental projects. The legislation of CVU stipulated however that CVUs teachers (teacher educators included) should engage in *research communication* (*d. forskningstilknytning*) with the universities and other research institutions (Hjort, 2005; Rasmussen, 2004). This concept was however ill defined from the beginning and caused extensive misunderstanding and controversies. It has been stated that the general assumption was that “the universities are seen as active creators of knowledge and CVUs as passive recipients” (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2006, p. 23). However there were exceptions and CVUs and universities made some contracts. According to the legislation on university colleges

from 2007 the term research cooperation has been changed to *research base (d. forskningsbaserings)* and communication with the universities is stipulated. It has been stated that increased equity is found in the contracts now as it seems that they reflect the universities' recognition of the university college expertise in certain matters

The CVUs and later university colleges have strived for the universities recognition of the professional bachelor as equivalent to first university degree. The universities resisted this claim (Hjort, 2005; Rasmussen, 2004) but lately some universities have admitted professions bachelors to a candidate program after completion of some bridge courses. This differs according to universities and disciplines.

In September 2007 Århus university applied for authorization to offer a teacher education program leading to university degree. Danmarks Accreditation Council authorized the application but the Danish government put the realization on hold and appointed a committee to look further into the matter. No decision has been taken when this is written.

The Danish development does reflect institutional drift but it is much slower than in the other Nordic countries.

CONCLUSIONS

The results show that Nordic teacher education is both placed within universities and non-university institutions. The Nordic countries have gone different routes regarding this issue, consequently there is no Nordic model. The analysis shows, however, that even if the organization of teacher education differs, the development reveals one communality, i.e. institutional drift. The institutional drift is, however, at different phase in the countries. An early and clear drift is found in Finland, Iceland and partly Sweden. A gradual and strong drift is also detected in the development of Norwegian teacher education. The slowest institutional drift is found in Denmark.

The slow Danish drift is found puzzling. It is worth noting that the switch to binary system in Denmark is the youngest one of the three countries adopting binary system. What is amazing is that it develops from a dual system just as the Norwegian system did but the development of the Danish dual system is very different from Norwegian system. As the Norwegian development reflects an early institutional drift which is lacking in Denmark.

The difference between Denmark and Iceland is also found interesting. It might have been expected that the development in Iceland would follow the Danish development given the close ties between Denmark and Iceland. Iceland was under the reign of Denmark from 1383 till the beginning of the twentieth century when the independence process began slowly and ended with declaration of an independent democratic republic in 1944. The lack of Icelandic university also caused Icelanders to travel to Europe to study at universities and during the 18th and 19th century they mostly went to Denmark. The development is however quite different. It could be that the difference is related to some geo-political difference between the countries as well as some underlying cultural difference. It is however beyond the scope of this paper to account for that as this difference requires further investigation.

It is argued here that given the development in other Nordic countries it will not be long until Danish teacher education will relate to the universities to a much greater extent than it does now, how it will be done is however not clear.

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