

Staffing Autonomy –
A Swedish Perspective
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Sweden's HE sector at a glance

- 48 HE institutions- 31 are state owned independent authorities, among them almost all of the larger HE institutions
- Higher Education is almost entirely financed by block grants from the government – no tuition fees (except non-European students) – total no of 400 000 students
- Research and research educ. is financed through block grants from the government (43 %) and external grants (57 %)
- Total turnover is about 70 billion SEK (23 billion education; 39 billion for research and research education)
- 75 000 persons are working in the HE sector, 50 000 are staff and 25 000 are employed PhD students
- Among the 50 000 staff, 30 000 are academic staff and 20 000 administrative staff

Some historic notes

- 1977 reform: HE institutions are given larger freedom from detailed steering by the state
- 1993 reform: More autonomy e.g. in hiring academic staff, creating study programmes, using block grants
- 1999: Promotion reform – senior lecturers given right to be promoted to professors
- 2011 reform: Large degree of autonomy especially the internal organisation. Promotion no longer mandatory.

Some facts relevant to staffing

- Complete autonomy from the state in hiring and dismissing staff (except the Vice-Chancellor) incl salaries
- Separate block grants for education and research
- Grants are activity based i.e. they finance activities and not directly staff ("permanent" → "indefinite duration")
- Professors and senior lecturers (lektor) are the only state regulated positions – HE institutions are free to have other positions
- There are laws and regulations concerning employment, in general, and state employment, in particular

Some regulations and traditions in employing academic staff

- Vacant positions must be publically posted (except in very special cases eg. “calling procedure” of professors)
- Many HE institutions have “internal promotion”
- Internal process for selecting the best candidate is not regulated except for the use of external experts for professors
- No regulated tenure track – traditionally: post-doc positions of 2-4 years, some with possibility of becoming a senior lecturer
- Decisions of state employment can be appealed and overruled
- Employment for more than 2 years in total during a 5 year period leads to an indefinite duration employment

Facts and observations concerning academic staff in HE institutions

- Complete autonomy from the state for HE institution in using staff for different purposes
- Academic staff positions are funded by HE & R activities. Salaries can be used strategically.
- Research intensive univ: large proportion of staff funded through external time-limited grants
- Traditions and labour union agreements lead to restrictedness concerning work content – many reflect old government regulations
- Traditionally low mobility in the HE sector and promotion reduces mobility

Concluding remarks on staffing autonomy I

- Autonomy in hiring and using staff & setting salaries gives large strategic freedom but tradition, collegial “jealously”, union agreements restrain
- State employments require emphasis on **formal** merits - defining formal requirements for position and how to evaluate different merits become very important
- Time consuming procedures for hiring academic staff due to use of external experts and bureaucracy

Concluding remarks on staffing autonomy II

- Calling procedure of professors strategic tool especially for international recruitments + more female professors (now 26%)
- High dependence on external research funding problematic
- Low mobility and low international recruitment is a general problem
- Long time before a more permanent position in many areas
- Sweden is a small country in the north, Swedish is necessary for teaching in many cases

Thank you for your attention!