6 Becoming universities?

Academisation and the integration of Finnish and Swedish teacher education institutions in the system of higher education

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Introduction

In a process that culminated in the 1970s, Finnish and Swedish teacher education for primary school teachers was integrated into the systems of higher education. In this chapter, we examine the process of academisation that institutions with their roots in institutions of teacher education underwent as they became universities or university colleges. Our purpose is to understand how reforms of teacher education programmes have interacted with higher education reforms in the academisation of former teacher training institutions. Thus, we are not merely studying the academisation of teacher education, but how reforms have contributed to the academisation of the entire multidisciplinary institution of which teacher education programmes, which have their roots in seminaries, now form part. A comparison between Sweden and Finland is particularly rewarding since, although the countries share a common history and have developed similar welfare societies and systems of education, the academisation process of institutions that emerged from folk-school seminaries¹ has been very different. The basic similarities between these two East-Nordic societies make it easier to isolate the causes of the differences that we can observe.

Based on statistics and biographies of seminary teachers from the 1930s, we establish in the next section that some aspects of academisation were already well underway at folk-school seminaries, particularly in Sweden. However, using statistics from 2011, in the third section, we show that in Finland, former folk-school seminaries have successfully integrated with the university system and are indistinguishable in their academisation from older universities. By contrast, Swedish university colleges that have developed from former folk-school seminaries still form a separate category, trailing behind older universities in the academic credentials of teachers and in resources for research. In the following section, we explain this development by analysing how the teacher education reforms of the 1970s in Sweden and Finland interacted with general reforms of higher education, affecting the governance and academic level of seminaries turned institutions of higher education. The development in Joensuu is given most attention, since it is most directly comparable to the development of Swedish university colleges. The special methodological considerations associated with these three studies are discussed separately in each section.

From the middle ages until 1809, when Finland was ceded to Russia, the areas that constitute modern Sweden and Finland were integrated parts of the same country. These common roots remain visible in the similarities between their systems of higher education. Finland's university system originates in Helsinki University, which long dominated Finnish higher education. It has its roots in the Royal Academy of Åbo, which was founded in 1640 and was Sweden's second-oldest university. Likewise, the systems of teacher education that developed in both countries from the mid-nineteenth century were similar in their basic structure. Grammar school teachers attended universities, while folk-school teachers were educated in a new institution, the seminaries. The first Swedish seminary was established in Stockholm in 1830 and the first in Finland in Jyväskylä in 1863. Thereafter, a network of seminaries was established across both countries. In the twentieth century, Jyväskylä (1934) and Stockholm (1956) were once more pioneers, as the first seminaries to be transformed into teacher education colleges. These colleges admitted students who had passed a matriculation exam and also conducted research and development in the field of education. By the 1970s, the remaining seminaries in Sweden and Finland became part of the system of higher education as teacher education colleges or subsidiaries of universities (Furuhagen and Holmén, 2017).

However, there are also differences between the two systems. For example, the Swedish system of higher education has been more centralised than the Finnish, governed by central government agencies and regulated by a common legislation. Until 1997, all Finnish universities were regulated by separate laws. To this day, there is no central government agency regulating higher education, and the Finnish constitution safeguards the autonomy of universities (Suomen säädöskokoelma 94:1919, §77; 731/1999, §123).

Academic drift and academisation

The concept of 'academic drift' has been used in research in two different ways, referring to the tendency either of institutions or of individuals to strive for ever-higher academic status (Jóhannsdóttir, 2008, 2012; Morphew, 2000). The institutional meaning of academic drift was popularised by Pratt and Burgess (1974, p. 23) through their study of English polytechnics in which they described how vocational colleges, originally established to serve the needs of the labour market, came to emulate universities. For example, course content became more academic and entry requirements were elevated. Pratt and Burgess trace this process back to the nineteenth century. They describe how, after this academic drift, older technical colleges were no longer able to fulfil their old functions, and new institutions had to be instated in order to meet the demands from regions and industries. Another research tradition has used academic drift to describe how competition in the labour market triggers individuals to strive for increasing levels of formal education (Kopatz and Pilz, 2015). Of course, these two forms of academic drift interact, since individual ambitions to attain higher levels of education spur institutions to raise academic standards. Likewise, the academic drift of institutions leads to greater output of highly educated graduates, which increases competition in society and

the labour market, fuelling individual academic drift. The ever-higher formal educational requirements to which this process leads have been criticised and dubbed ‘credential inflation’ (Collins, 2011).

The concept of academic drift entails the notion that increased academisation is an unintended effect of the dynamics in the system. However, for some stakeholders in these institutions, increased academisation is indeed what they are attempting to achieve. The interests of central and regional authorities, as well as of the academic staff and the regional labour market, are not aligned in this regard. Therefore, we use the neutral term ‘academisation’ in this article, when we are not directly referring to unintended academic drift. Academisation can be defined and measured in different ways. Both Swedish and Finnish teacher education have undergone nominal academisation, as they are placed in institutions that are now part of the system of higher education; in Finland, these institutions are all attached to full universities. However, another metric of academisation relates to the academic credentials of the teaching staff and the level of research carried out at the institutions. This chapter investigates the extent to which nominal academisation at the investigated institutions is reflected in measurable improvements in research activity and the credentials of the teaching staff.

Nordic perspectives

It is difficult to find earlier research focusing on how teacher education colleges have been transformed into universities through a process of academisation. However, studies of academic drift, higher education or teacher education often touch on aspects of this development. Although we focus on Nordic developments, it is important to remember that the trend in Sweden and Finland from the 1960s, for teacher education to move from non-academic colleges to the higher education sector, was part of a more general trend in Europe and North America, encompassing other vocational educations such as nursing and social work (Smeby, 2014).

From the 1970s until the mid-1990s, Norway had a dual system of universities and regional colleges. The latter consisted of two types of colleges: professional colleges, providing, for instance, teacher education and health education and district colleges offering short professional courses in business and finance related to the region. At this time, the development was both top-down- and bottom-up-driven. With time, a more top-down system has prevailed. In 2003, the quality reform of higher education led to a new degree system aligned with the Bologna process and, since 2017, all teacher education programmes lead to a master degree. Earlier research has highlighted the role of political intentions and international trends in this development (Askvik and Helland, 2014, p. 64; Jarning, 2019; Karlsen, 2005; Skagen and Elstad, 2020).

Icelandic teacher education has also experienced a process of academisation. The first new institution of higher education after the University of Iceland (founded in 1911) was established when the former Teacher Training College was transformed into a university college in 1971. Thereafter, a number of secondary-level vocational educational programmes, such as those training nurses and

preschool teachers, have been transformed into university colleges or have merged with existing universities (Jóhannsdóttir, 2012, p. 209; Sigurðsson et al., 2020).

In Denmark, teacher education colleges have not undergone the same process of academisation as in other Nordic countries (Jarning, 2019; Jóhannsdóttir, 2012, p. 208; Thomsen, 2014, p. 16; for a detailed description of the Danish case, see Chapter 7 in this volume). There, traditional colleges providing vocational education, such as primary-teacher education and nurse training, survived independently until 2000, when they were gathered into 25 college centres for continuing education (*Center for Videregående Uddannelser*). In 2008, the college centres were merged with the remaining independent colleges into eight college centres (*Professionshøjskoler*). However, these are still not considered part of the higher education sector as they do not issue academic degrees and have only limited research resources (Madsen and Jensen, 2020). Thus, although reforms of teacher education have interacted with academisation in all the Nordic countries, Sweden and Finland made a particularly early and concentrated push by placing all teacher education in the higher education system in the 1970s.

The academic level of the seminaries in the 1930s

In order to establish the effects of the reforms that integrated teacher education into the university system on the academisation of former seminaries, it is important to establish a baseline. Although the folk-school seminaries were formally part of the school system, with no connections to the system of higher education, they experienced some academic drift during their century-long history. As the formal process of integrating teacher education into the higher education system in Finland can be said to have started with the inauguration of the Jyväskylä College of Education in 1934, the most appropriate point of comparison is right before its foundation. Academisation involves many parameters, several of which are qualitative and difficult to compare, as what is considered characteristic of a vivid academic culture and high academic standard varies with time, place and even between different faculties at the same institution. Still, the share of faculty possessing doctoral degrees allows for some comparability, although credential inflation must be taken into account in longitudinal comparisons. In 1933, only one of the 17 teachers in the permanent faculty at Jyväskylä held a doctoral degree and one held a licentiate degree (Mikkola, Leinonen and Rekola, 1937). Some of these teachers would later acquire doctoral degrees and others advanced to become professors at Jyväskylä College of Education. The same year, there was also only one doctor and one licentiate among 21 teachers at Sortavala seminary (Härkönen, Pankakoski and Seppä, 1940).

In Sweden, the academic level of seminary teachers was much higher. For example, all associate professors and lecturers employed at Stockholm's teacher seminary between 1915 and 1930 held doctoral degrees and they were all productive researchers (Sörensen, 1930, pp. 216–222). Stockholm was an extreme case, but even in the Swedish folk-school seminaries, 40% of the 67 *lektorer* held doctoral degrees in 1939 (Skolöverstyrelsen, 1940). By comparison, even 60 years later, only 31% of the teaching staff at Swedish university colleges (excluding art and nursing

colleges) and 62% at the universities held doctoral degrees (Högskoleverket, 1998, p. 33; Tengner and Olofsson, 2000, p. 83). A reason for the higher share of doctors in the Swedish seminaries might be that they were generally located in larger cities and it was easier for them to recruit teachers with parallel careers in grammar schools or universities (Sörensen, 1930, p. 217).

Paradoxically, although Swedish seminary teachers were at a significantly higher academic level, at least measured by the share of faculty in possession of doctoral degrees, the academic exploits of seminary teachers have been more valued in Finnish historiography. For example, a 2009 history of what is today Jyväskylä University emphasises that the transformation of Jyväskylä seminary into a College of Educational Science was not a total rupture with the earlier culture, since some seminary teachers held doctoral degrees, conducted research and published academic articles (Valtonen, 2009, pp. 126–128). In Stockholm, as in Jyväskylä, the seminary was closed a few years after a teacher education college was founded in the city, in 1956. However, the seminary tradition has not been emphasised in histories from Stockholm, which only briefly mention that the old seminary buildings were taken over by the college (Blix and Arfwedson, 1996, p. 15).

As Jyväskylä developed into a full university, it emphasised its old roots and the academic achievements of teachers in a variety of fields which could be seen as forerunners of later university departments. However, the Stockholm teacher training college remained focused on teacher education and research in the field of education. Here, there was no obvious sense of continuity with the accomplished theologians and physicists who had taught at the seminary that preceded it. In addition, while the Stockholm teacher training college spearheaded the comprehensive school reform, former seminary teachers had a background similar to that of the grammar school teachers; many even served in both functions and were seen as a conservative force opposing the reform. Thus, for political and disciplinary reasons, the Stockholm teacher training college had few incentives to celebrate the high academic standard of previous seminary teachers in its historiography.

This shift in focus from academia is exemplified by Sweden's second teacher education college, founded in Malmö in 1960. The education of folk-school teachers was moved there from the seminary in nearby Lund, along with some of the teaching staff. During the 1950s, proximity to practice – at the many schools in Malmö – became more important than proximity to Lund University (Bergendal, 1985, p. 7).

The academisation of former institutions for teacher training in 2011

In this section, we use quantitative data from Sweden and Finland to investigate the degree to which institutions of higher education with roots in folk-school seminaries have caught up with older universities in terms of their academic level. We compare the educational levels of the research and teaching staff in the system of higher education, as well as the research intensity at these institutions. The task is complicated by the fact that statistics from Sweden and Finland are not directly comparable. However, since the primary intent is not a straight comparison of the

two countries, but to study the cohesion or diversity within each system, a perfect match of variables is not necessary. In Sweden, the annual report by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (*Högskoleverket*) (2011) discloses the share of research and teaching staff, excluding graduate students, who are in possession of doctoral degrees, as well as the percentage of the budget of each institution that is dedicated to research and the education of graduate students.

Statistics on teaching and research staff at Finnish universities are divided into four academic levels, plus part-time teachers. The last category comprises teachers outside the traditional academic hierarchy, and is particularly common at the University of the Arts Helsinki. All teachers at levels II to IV have doctoral degrees, while level I comprises doctoral students. Until 2010, Finnish universities were not entirely consistent about registering their employees as part-time teachers or allocating them to one of the four levels. However, from 2011 onwards, the statistics become more reliable, as many teachers were moved from the part-time category to the appropriate level. For this reason, we use 2011 as the year of comparison for the two countries. While official Finnish figures include graduate students in teaching and research staff, to achieve the best possible comparability with the Swedish figures, we have excluded doctoral students from the total when calculating the percentage of the teaching and research staff that are in possession of a doctoral degree.

Because of differences in the available statistics, we investigate research intensity in Finland using an output metric (publications per teacher/researcher), not an input metric as for Sweden (percentage of the budget). In the Finnish figures, we include doctoral students in the total number of teachers and researchers.

In the scatterplots in Figures 6.1 and 6.2, universities and university colleges have been divided into categories: artistic, of teacher education origin, new (i.e. founded after the 1970s teacher education reforms) and old. In Sweden, there is also a category of special institutions (the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences and the Swedish Defence University).

Figure 6.1 reveals that in Finland the old universities and institutions with roots in folk-school seminaries are clustered together in the top right. While the one artistic institution (the University of Arts) in particular, and also a new university (specifically, the technical Aalto University) distinguish themselves from the rest in being less academic in their employment and publication patterns, Finnish institutions with roots in folk-school seminaries (such as the University of Eastern Finland) have not remained second-tier academic institutions according to these metrics.

By contrast, the Swedish system of higher education (Figure 6.2) is more segmented. The old universities still dominate. Of institutions with folk-school seminary origins, only one, Linköping, which has close contacts to a research-intensive industry, approaches their level. Among the new institutions, only one (Södertörn University) approaches older universities in terms of its share of teachers/researchers with doctoral degrees, although it diverges in terms of resources for research. Södertörn University is located in the capital and probably enjoys the same regional advantage in recruiting doctors as the Stockholm seminary did in the 1930s.

This quantitative analysis confirms our observation that in Sweden former seminaries have not yet managed to reach the academic level of older universities. By contrast, the Finnish universities with roots in former seminaries, Jyväskylä and

Figure 6.1 Research intensity in Finnish universities by type of institution, 2011. Vertical axis: Publications per research and teaching employee. Horizontal axis: Categories II to IV of total research and teaching employees, excluding graduate students.

Source: Vipunen statistical database (2020).

Figure 6.2 Research intensity in Swedish universities by type of institution, 2011. Vertical axis: Share of budget for research. Horizontal axis: Holders of doctoral degrees among total research and teaching employees, excluding graduate students.

Source: Högskoleverket (2011).

Eastern Finland, are in the same league as the old universities. In Finland, it is more difficult than in Sweden to categorise these institutions. For example, it can be debated whether Jyväskylä should belong to the category of older universities or universities of teacher education origin, as it entered the realm of higher education so early. However, since all Finnish universities, except the University of Arts and Aalto University, are clustered together tightly in the diagram, it is of minor importance for the analysis of how the categorisation is performed.

In Sweden, old universities and artistic institutions form distinct clusters at the two ends of the spectrum, while the other categories are mixed in the middle. Although the Swedish former seminaries got a head start in the system of higher education in the 1970s, they do not appear to have achieved higher levels of academisation than university colleges founded later.

Differences between Swedish and Finnish reforms

Unlike their Swedish counterparts, Finnish institutions of higher education with roots in folk-school seminaries have managed to catch up with older universities in their level of academisation. It raises the question as to what factors can explain this development, which is even more surprising considering that the academic baseline for Swedish seminaries was higher than for their Finnish counterparts in the 1930s, before the wave of reforms started.

First, although the initial plans for teacher education reform in Sweden and Finland during the 1960s were very similar, their implementation was different. Finland followed the initial plan of academisation, while Sweden compromised. The integration of Swedish teacher education into the system of higher education in the 1970s was preceded by a long period of preparation in committees and by partial reforms. In 1965, a government committee proposed that all teacher education should take place in large teacher training colleges through the establishment of new units in university cities (SOU, 1965:29). However, following successful lobbying by regional interests and the seminaries, in 1968, the parliament instead decided that the nine existing folk-school seminaries located outside university cities should be preserved as small teacher training colleges for primary school teachers, which lacked professors and research resources. Thus, non-academic traditions and practices from seminaries continued to dominate teacher education, especially in the many seminaries turned into small teacher training colleges. These teacher training colleges were not part of the system of higher education, but were subject to the board of education (Furuhagen and Holmén, 2017; Linné, 1996, p. 309; Marklund, 1989, pp. 306–309).

In Finland, the ambitions for academic teacher education were similar to those in Sweden, but were realised more rapidly and thoroughly. In 1969, a committee report warned that small teacher training colleges might remain mere seminaries and that larger units were more effective. It recommended that class and subject teachers should be educated for four years at universities and at teacher training colleges attached to them, leading to a bachelor's degree (Grundskollärarkommittén, 1969, p. 108; Kähkönen, 1979, p. 74). In December the same year, the parliament decided to close several seminaries and incorporate the rest into the new system

(Kähkönen, 1979, p. 76; Valtiopäivät, 1969, pp. 2282–2287, 2320–2325). This reform, implemented in 1974, decided the basic academic structure of future teacher education. From 1974 onwards, all Finnish teachers studied for four years at university. Class teachers took a bachelor's degree in pedagogy and subject teachers studied for a bachelor's in their main subject. When the bachelor's degree was removed from the system of higher education in 1979, teacher education was upgraded to a master's programme, although no committee had suggested a higher level than bachelor (Kähkönen, 1979, pp. 100–101; Vuorenpää, 2003, p. 93).

Thus, in 1974, most Finnish seminaries were either abandoned or attached to existing universities. However, Joensuu experienced an independent development similar to those of Swedish seminaries, and it is thereby the Finnish university which is best suited for direct comparison with the Swedish case. Its predecessor, Sortavala seminary, was founded in 1880, but was moved after the Sortavala area was ceded in World War II. In 1953, it was relocated to Joensuu. In 1969, it became part of Joensuu University College, which, in 1984, received the status of a full university. In 1974, Savonlinna seminary was attached to Joensuu as a unit providing teacher education, and, in 2010, the University of Eastern Finland was formed through a merger with Kuopio University, which had a healthcare and life science profile. Initially, the faculty at Joensuu felt that the government and vice-chancellors of Finland's established universities were sceptical of its ability to develop into a research university, and was content to keep it a mere teacher education college without full professors. However, local forces and, particularly, Joensuu's vice-chancellor, Heikki Kirkinen, worked hard to achieve full university status, complete with professors and research. The elevation of teacher education to an academic degree became an effective argument in this struggle (Makkonen, 2004, pp. 50–51). Studies at *laudatur* level, which was required for teaching in upper-secondary schools, required a professorship. This illustrates how the Finnish decision to combine the education of class and subject teachers at all teacher education institutions fuelled academisation. Another important catalyst for academisation was the elevation of class-teacher education to master's level at the end of 1979 (Nevala, 2009, p. 307).

In contrast to comparable Swedish institutions, Joensuu had the autonomy to grant doctoral degrees, which paved the way for a more rapid process of academisation. Already in 1972, Joensuu awarded a licentiate degree, and, in 1977, its first doctoral degree. As the college grew more multidisciplinary and academic, it became a university in 1984 (Nevala, 2009, pp. 233, 236).

The law that granted Joensuu university status also prescribed a traditional faculty-based governance model, replacing the 'areas' that had existed in Joensuu up to that point. Placing history and geography in the same area had been logical from the standpoint of teacher education, but transgressed the border between faculties (Nevala, 2009, p. 346). Thereby, the governance reform marked a step from the seminary tradition towards an academic structure.

Thus, the academisation of Finnish institutions of higher education was aided by several decisions: to move all teacher education to the higher education sector, to educate class and subject teachers at all institutions and to elevate all degrees at Finnish universities to master's level. An important facilitator was the autonomy

within the system, which allowed all institutions to grant doctoral degrees. These preconditions for academisation were all established in 1974–1979.

In Sweden, all of these conditions were initially lacking, although some were achieved later. The university law of 1977 elevated teacher education colleges to the higher education sector, as a system of 12 new university colleges were established, mostly by consolidating existing post-secondary programmes. In 11 of the 12 colleges, teacher education colleges or preschool-teacher seminaries already existed. These teacher education colleges had been folk-school seminaries until the late 1960s. Following the reform, the board of education no longer governed teacher education, as the agency for higher education controlled the new university colleges (Högskoleverket, 1998; Ringarp and Parding, 2017).

However, the Swedish government clarified that the intention of the reform was not to expand traditional university education, but to promote vocational training. Although education at the new colleges should be connected to research, the government did not endow them with permanent research funding, as they feared a division of resources would hamper research. Thus, a clear distinction was still made between the old universities and the new university colleges (Högskoleverket, 1998).

For long, the new colleges were completely dominated by teacher education. In their first year, 1977/1978, two-thirds of graduates were teachers, mostly preschool teachers (40% of all graduates). In Gävle, 750 out of 930 students were enrolled in teacher programmes (Stymne, 2002, p. 13). In contrast, traditional academic tertiary education was rare outside the former university subsidiaries in Karlstad, Örebro and Växjö. For the first five years, the education sector maintained its dominance, after which the number of student teachers began to drop and other programmes were introduced. However, even in 1992/1993, 42% of degrees were awarded to teachers (Högskoleverket, 1998).

Unlike Finland, which closed most seminaries in 1974, Sweden in the early 1970s maintained all its folk-school seminaries as teacher education colleges. When they were transformed into university colleges in 1977, class-teacher education was perceived to be too dispersed. Therefore, the government closed this programme in, for example, Kristianstad University College, although it was brought back through local lobbying in 1981. In the intermediate years, only the programmes for preschool and afterschool teachers remained at the new university college (Glimberg, 1988, p. 138). In the second half of the 1980s, when the number of student teachers declined, teacher programmes at several university colleges were threatened with closure (Stymne, 2002, p. 19). The decade-long situation of precariousness faced by teacher education programmes, the kernel of the new colleges, was a weak starting point for the process of academisation. Given the numerical weight of student teachers, the defence of the class-teacher programme was, at least in Gävle, seen as a struggle for the very survival of the university college (Stymne, 2002, p. 19). Thus, while the academisation of former teacher education institutions in Finland was fuelled by the fact that they all contained both class- and subject-teacher programmes, in Sweden, they not only lacked subject-teacher programmes, but struggled to maintain their class-teacher programmes – and thereby their very existence.

While Finland elevated all university degrees to master's level in 1979, Sweden removed all academic degrees in its 1977 reform of the system of higher education. In 1993, the master's degree was reintroduced. Old universities were free to grant degrees in any subject, but the university colleges had to apply for this right separately in each subject. The new master's degrees elevated the academic standard of the university colleges, in part, by making it easier to recruit qualified teachers (Andrén, 2003). However, to this day, Swedish class-teacher programmes do not lead to a master's degree. This has slowed the academisation of university colleges, where a substantial share of students are enrolled in class-teacher programmes.

The Swedish university colleges also lacked teachers with postgraduate education. Among associate professors and lecturers (*lektorer och adjunkter*), only 29% had a postgraduate degree in 1996 (Högskoleverket, 1998). An explanation for the low level of postgraduates among the staff is that the Swedish university colleges, unlike Swedish universities and all Finnish institutions of higher education, were not allowed to grant doctoral degrees. Research funding was also minimal. For example, in its first six years, the annual research budget of Gävle University College was SEK 200,000–300,000 (Stymne, 2002, p. 16). However, after the new government research policy in 1990, funding for research increased at the small university colleges (Stymne, 2002, p. 49).

From 1998 onwards, the university colleges were allowed to apply for the right to grant doctoral degrees within particular research areas. This made it possible to improve the academic credentials of the faculty through internal efforts. In Gävle, the application for establishing research areas in technology and humanities/social sciences, enabling doctoral study, was formulated as a vision of becoming a university. According to the former vice-chancellor, Birgitta Stymne (2002, pp. 58–60), this was important since the meaning of 'university' was much clearer than 'research area'. The vice-chancellor of Mid-Sweden University College, Alf Gunnmo (2003, p. 12), also equated 'research area' with university status. This institution in Sundsvall and Östersund has since achieved official university status, which still eludes Gävle. However, Swedish university colleges generally use the title of university in English. In 2016, Högskolan i Jönköping officially changed its name to the English-language Jönköping University. This decision was reported to the Parliamentary Ombudsman, who dismissed the case since the office only supervises government agencies, not foundations (Skarsgård, 2016). Jönköping is the only institution of seminary origin that has been transformed into a foundation. Although a superficial matter, the name change illustrates how increased autonomy has allowed Jönköping to pursue a more independent route to academisation.

Conclusions

The academic credentials of Swedish seminary teachers in the 1930s, which were much higher than those of their Finnish counterparts, did not form the foundation for academisation as the seminaries were transformed into teacher education colleges. Instead, Finnish institutions of higher education with roots in seminaries have achieved the academic level of traditional universities, while comparable Swedish institutions are still trailing behind. This can be explained by the interplay between policies of teacher education and higher education in general in the two countries.

Since teacher education formed the core of almost all new colleges in both Sweden and Finland, the academisation of these institutions was strongly affected by the academic level of teacher education in each country. The elevation of class-teacher education to master's level in Finland made it easier for teacher-education-centred institutions of higher education with their roots in a seminary tradition to transition into full research universities than in Sweden, where comparable studies did not lead to a traditional academic degree. Importantly, all Finnish teacher education came to take place at institutions that educated both class and subject teachers, and subject-teacher education required high academic credentials from the teaching staff in a range of subjects. Teacher education thereby acted as a kernel around which a full university could be created.

An early decision with continuing repercussions was that Sweden in 1969 maintained all its folk-school seminaries, renamed teacher education colleges. Finland, by contrast, decided to close seminaries that were not attached to universities, or developed them into institutions of higher education on their own, as happened with Joensuu. The reduction of the number of units in Finland in the early 1970s meant that surviving institutions did not, like Swedish university colleges, need to fear for the continuation of their class-teacher programmes and thereby their very existence throughout the 1980s, when student levels dropped. Since survival was secured, efforts could be focused on advancing academic standards. The reduced number of units also made it easier for the remaining ones to attract students and qualified teachers.

Generally, the governing bodies of new university colleges aimed at a higher academic level than the central authorities had intended. A vital precondition for their success was their degree of autonomy. For example, although the Finnish government's plans for the teacher education college in Joensuu were not markedly more ambitious than those of the Swedish government for university colleges, Joensuu had enough leeway to become successful in its attempts to attain university status. In the more centralised Swedish system, not much academic drift occurred in the smaller colleges until the 1990s, when decentralisation reforms increased their autonomy. Enabled by this development, since the mid-1990s Swedish university colleges have begun to actively envision – and in several cases achieve – full university status.

Note

- 1 To avoid confusion, we translate *folkskoleseminarium* as folk-school seminary. In English texts, these are often called teacher training colleges for the education of elementary school teachers, but this is problematic since their successor *lärarhögskola* is conventionally translated as teacher training college.

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