Transcending borders in higher education: Internationalisation policies in Sweden

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Abstract
This article examines the national and European policy contexts that shaped the Swedish internationalisation agenda in higher education since 2000, the policy ideas that were mobilised to promote it, and the national priorities that steered higher education debates. The analysis highlights how domestic and European policy priorities, as well as discourses around increasing global economic reach and building solidarity across the world, have produced an internationalisation strategy that is distinctly 'national'. Drawing on the analysis of the most recent internationalisation strategies we argue that the particular Swedish approach to internationalisation has its ideational foundations in viewing higher education as a political instrument to promote social mobility and justice, as well as a means to develop economic competitiveness and employability capacity. In addition, internationalisation has been used to legitimise national reform goals, but also as a policy objective on its own with the ambition to position Sweden as a competitive knowledge nation in a global context.

Introduction

More than any other education sector, higher education (HE) reflects complexity and rapid change. Any student of higher education policies can quickly identify common trends such as the increasing influences of globalisation and interconnections on the sector, the changes brought about by systematic growth of student numbers, technological innovation, increasing diversification and commercialisation practices (Bjarnason, 2007; Dobbins and Kwiek, 2017). One of the consequences of these changes has been an increasing focus on internationalisation, the process of intentional integration of 'an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education' (Knight, 2003: 2). Still, this process is far from straightforward or uniform, and different national and institutional contexts frame internationalisation

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differently, altering and adjusting its definition, rationale, policy content and practice to suit their particular circumstances (Forstorp and Mellström, 2013; Gornitzka and Langfeldt, 2008). In addition, a number of authors in the field caution against the unintended negative consequences of superficial implementation of internationalisation, and its increasingly instrumental, uncritical or deteriorating content (Frølich, 2008; Knight, 2013; Stein, 2019; Yemini and Sagie, 2016). Still, internationalisation is a popular theme at the level of transnational and national policies, lobby groups and commercial actors, as well as for individual universities and academics (European Commission et al., 2018; OECD, 2012), with each actor driven by different priorities and motivations for engaging with it.

Within Europe, internationalisation ideas and practices have been institutionalised through the twin frameworks of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) launched as intergovernmental cooperation in 1999 (known as the 'Bologna process'); and, the creation in 2000 of the European Research Area, a part of the Lisbon Strategy and formally introduced in 2009 in the Lisbon Treaty (article, 179 TFEU). These two frameworks have been driving institutional changes in higher education systems across the continent, that pertain to teaching, in the form of alignment around common academic structures, credit transfer systems, mutual recognition of university qualifications, and the design of quality assurance systems. They have also targeted research through the creation of mechanisms for a European governance of research, research roadmaps and infrastructures, among others (European Commission, 2012). The political impact on the participating countries, more visibly the Bologna process and EHEA, has been significant since it enabled countries within and beyond the EU to develop international embeddedness in their HE systems and to launch modernisation or quality reforms (Dakowska, 2019; Muller and Ravinet, 2008).

Such structures operate as legitimising references in national debates around higher education. They function to provide national policy actors with arguments for reforms via 'externalisation to world situations' (Ringarp and Waldow, 2016), as sources for 'silent borrowing' of ideas or practices (Waldow, 2009), adaptive policy learning (Lange and Alexiadou, 2010), selective 'filtering', interpretation and adoption of relevant aspects for reform (Phillips and Ochs, 2003), or even 'voluntary co-option' and active engagement (Brøgger, 2016: 86) of states in adopting large-scale reforms in order to respond to external pressures and measures. Internationalisation has embedded itself in HE systems across Europe as an independent discourse as well as part of such reference external contexts (Altbach, 2013), with distinct outcomes in terms of how universities with different histories and in different countries adopt its norms and values (Elken et al., 2016; Hill et al., 2019). National responses to and filtering of internationalisation still remain under-researched in the Swedish HE policy setting, where current and ongoing important policy developments and an internationalisation strategy proposal from 2018 have put these issues on the national policy agenda.

In this article we analyse internationalisation policies in Sweden that, similar to other European and Nordic countries, has been proactive in creating relevant policy frameworks for universities and invested resources to make it operational (Christensen et al., 2014; Dir, 2017: 19. Little is known about the evolution of internationalisation policies against other HE policies, and the role of ideas in sharpening its focus, rationales and justifications in the national context over time. The study contributes to contemporary discussions across the European HE policy space that is increasingly concerned with the multiple aspects and diverse national manifestations of, and responses to internationalisation (Dakowska, 2017; Kehm and Teichler, 2007) its definitions, institutionalisation, management, and its consequences (Bedenlier et al., 2017).

The paper is organised as follows. First, we describe the theoretical and analytical perspectives that frame our research, followed by a section on the methodology of the study. Next, we present our analysis in two main sections. We begin with a historical analysis of higher education reforms

in, primarily, the post-2000 period that highlight the interconnectedness of internationalisation ideas with (a) the Bologna and EU frameworks, and (b) their interplay with national pre-existing policy priorities. The next part of the findings explores two national strategies with regards to the ideational dimensions of internationalisation as a set of policy ideas that provide major motivation for reforming the university sector, as well as ideas that function to legitimise other policy goals. We conclude with a discussion that draws out the significance of national reforms for understanding higher education policy directions across Europe.

Internationalisation and policy change: Ideas and national responses

Our study of internationalisation draws on theoretical tools from policy analysis, comparative education and the movement of ideas, in order to understand policy change in national contexts. Different logics for policy adoption and change may be at play at different times and depending on the context. Historically formed institutions of higher education do change, even if slowly, through 'layering', the selective adoption of new ideas (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). In such evolving and gradual processes, revised policy directions are introduced on top of existing ones, and changes are adjusted to domestic and external political, economic and social environments (Streeck and Thelen, 2005). Layering as a concept denotes successive and incremental institutional change whereby new elements of policy are added without completely replacing established practices (van der Heijden and Kuhlmann, 2017). Each addition may be relatively small, but the cumulative effect as institutions evolve may result in a more fundamental change. Displacement is a further source of gradual change where 'new models emerge and . . . call into question existing, previously taken-for-granted organizational forms and practices' (Streeck and Thelen, 2005: 19) usually following some other mode of incremental change.

The article engages in particular with analytical perspectives that explore: (a) how policy ideas interact with existing national and institutional traditions of policy and practice; and (b) how national policies respond to international mobile ideas such as internationalisation.

(a) The process of policy formation requires an examination of the role of ideas in the policy process and there are several approaches that consider ideas in policy research. These range from an exclusive focus on the substantive content of ideas, to the interactive processes involved in discourse – as ideas are generated, communicated and legitimated (Schmidt, 2008: 306). These ideas need to be examined from the perspective of context (where, when, how and why these ideas are promoted), agency (who promotes what, to whom), in addition to content (what is entailed) (Schmidt, 2010). Policy ideas are both dynamic and representative of particular normative positions that underpin what types of policy are possible and available at any particular time period. As such, exploring ideas can help us understand how and why policies translate to specific operational forms and instruments (Courtois and Veiga, 2020). Particular ideas around internationalisation are mobilised to shape interests within the university sector, but also to justify certain choices and decisions about the focus or direction of policies. In this respect, we suggest that policy ideas around HE internationalisation provide meaning for political action: First, in *legitimating* such action by attaching value to it – what Schmidt (2008) refers to as *normative ideas*, and second, through a *cognitive set of ideas* that 'provide guidelines and maps for political action' that justify particular policies and policy programmes (p. 306).

(b) Within comparative education research there is an increasingly large body of work that explores the global movements of policy ideas and the institutional developments that take place at national level. Internationalisation comprises a set of ideas that we find in the global education policy field, whereby university education is conceptualised as part of a politics of knowledge promoted by international and transnational organisations (Buckner, 2019; Robson and Wihlborg, 2019). Actors such as the EU and EHEA encourage and disseminate policy adoption and transfer, while they also evaluate, measure and rank countries in terms of effective implementation of promoted policies (Steiner-Khamsi and Waldow, 2012). Higher education is a sector that in most countries in Europe enjoys considerable institutional autonomy to adopt and interpret particular ideas and policies, but at the same time it also operates within the parameters of national legislation and historical institutional patterns (Shattock, 2014).

In the crossing of boundaries, policies and policy ideas are recontextualised and adapted in ways that reflect nationally defined priorities and positions that, to a large extent, determine the extent and depth to which states decide to engage with them. In our case, the way that Sweden interacts with and interprets European cooperation frameworks and the Bologna process offers such an example of flexible adoption of internationalisation ideas and practices, in what Dakowska (2017) calls a relation of reciprocity between national and European institutions. Given the nature of this policy field, the expected benefits from such engagement include a combination of positive reputational and material outcomes for the higher education sector, as well as Sweden being seen as a reliable and progressive international partner (Gornitzka and Stensaker, 2004). Here we explore how political and administrative frameworks of higher education, with dense patterns of working norms underpinning the purposes and functions of the sector, mediate internationalisation policies by focusing attention, channelling resources and adjusting practices. In these processes, externalisation (Schriewer, 1990) to world situations may serve to legitimise particular policies in ways that connect these to the national policy-making arena and its particular history and policy agenda (cf. Ringarp and Waldow, 2016).

Methodological approach and material

Our methodology entails a critical examination of internationalisation policies and rationales and includes an analysis of Swedish policy documents on higher education and internationalisation in particular. We focus primarily on the period post-2005, which coincides with the more systematic and explicit commitments to international dimensions, even if we also look back to the early years of internationalisation (post-1970s). The analysis draws on public and official documents in the form of commission and agency reports, and Government Bills. In addition, and in particular for the first and more historical/contextual section of the forthcoming findings, we also draw on secondary sources and literature on issues of internationalisation and Swedish higher education. We analysed core strategy documents with a primary focus on identifying the definitions, rationales and justifications for internationalisation displayed in the different documents, along with an explicit analytical effort to connect these to the context of HE policy priorities that the government of the day was pursuing. This empirical material includes three core documents. First, the 2005 internationalisation strategy, presented in a government Bill with the title 'New world, new higher education' (Govt. Bill 2004/05:162). A little more than a decade later in 2017, the government appointed a commission to inquire on internationalisation and to propose a revised strategy. The commission produced its report in two parts: First, the 'Internationalisation of Swedish Higher Education and Research: A Strategic Agenda' (SOU 2018:3), followed by the final report

'Increasing the Attractiveness of Sweden as a Knowledge Nation' (SOU 2018:78). We should note that the formal decision on a revised strategy is still pending and no government Bill has been presented to the parliament yet.

We analysed these three strategy documents that represent core stages in national policy-making procedures. They follow a 'tradition in Sweden of using templates which specify the aims and direction of politics to come' (Forstorp and Mellström, 2018: 196) and incorporate different interests and perspectives in these processes. A Bill (the 2005 Strategy document) represents the government and needs to be endorsed by the parliament, whereas commission reports (the two 2018 documents) may include a wide range of actors from the sector and are not explicitly party political in their orientation, in contrast to government Bills. Still, a commission is instigated by the government via one of its ministries. The government issues the remit for the commission, specifies the focus of the inquiry, which in turn influences the work of the commission, even if direct government involvement at the inquiry stage is rather limited.

Next, our findings unfold in two sections. In the first, we focus on reforms and policy change through a historical-institutional approach that includes an analysis of the policy contexts and reforms relevant to internationalisation and the strategies. In the second part we explore more explicitly the ideational dimensions of internationalisation (Schmidt, 2008, 2010) in the context of the two national strategies in particular.

Reforms and policy change: Sweden's path to internationalising HE

We can trace the historical roots of the two Swedish internationalisation strategies in the publication of two reports by the Higher Education Authority in the 1970s (UKÄ, 1973, 1974). These looked to issues and guidelines necessary for student mobility, but also gave a steering of HE towards developing an international understanding (Nilsson, 2019). The significance of this was connected to the need for Swedish economic expansion in global markets, in addition to motivations around solidarity with countries in the non-industrialised world (Börjesson, 2005; Kälvemark, 1997). This early policy work found its way into the 1977 Higher Education Act that included a general goal for HE to promote and facilitate understanding for other countries and international contexts. Between 1977 and the next major legislation of 1993, higher education shifted from a largely centralist, state-government sector to a more autonomous one with emphasis on accountability for institutions, and the funding system was linked to the numbers of students who graduated (Segerholm et al., 2019). The decentralisation changes of the early 1990s, part of a wider set of reforms across the Swedish public sector, and the accompanying quality drive and institutional autonomy for universities, were modelled on similar international reforms. At the same time, changes in student financing conditions, and the possibility for Erasmus participation since 1992–1993, made international mobility for students possible and widely accessible, with large numbers of Swedes choosing to study abroad, adding to an increasing drive for internationalisation.

The 1990s saw Sweden's intense engagement with Europe through its entry to the European Union in 1995, fuelling Europeanisation and mobility as politically important issues (Jacobsson and Sundström, 2016) and further connecting Sweden to a European labour market. Preparation for entry to the European Community and the political objective of West European integration, further intensified debates around the need for universities to be more international in their outlook. In the 1992 Bill, Challenges to Science: A Strategy Towards the 21st Century, it was repeatedly emphasised that the small size of Sweden makes international cooperation an imperative. Cooperation with European and Nordic countries more particularly, was seen as a primary strategic area for development. Sweden's accession to the EU and participation in education and

research programmes signalled what Nilsson (2003: 23) called 'a shift from internationalisation to Europeanisation', but this was balanced by the traditional Swedish involvement in international politics of a humanitarian and cultural nature (Kälvemark, 1997; Nilsson, 2003).

In these reforms and processes, internationalisation has taken various forms, ranging from brief references, to providing the major motivation for reforming the university sector. The twin rationales for internationalisation to develop solidarity with developing nations as well as economic competitiveness, are discernible from the start, even if with different emphases over time. In the early internationalisation programmes followed by the Swedish Government (1970s–1980s) the emphasis was on partnerships with universities and countries in the global South, but economic growth and competitiveness concerns became increasingly 'layered into' the overall policy direction and justification (Kälvemark, 1997: 174).

A vehicle for displacement: The 'Bologna drive' in Sweden

The international dimension visibly increased its presence and intensity in HE documents since Sweden joined the Bologna process in 1999, by a 'displacement' process (Streeck and Thelen, 2005: 19) that introduced a new international model to national policies. Over the last 20 years, it has been gradually institutionalised in policy documents that come to endorse the benchmarks and monitoring commitments of the Bologna process and the European Higher Education Area, but also research and education policy, the Lisbon process, student and staff mobility. When Sweden signed up to the Bologna declaration, it was a significant step for a reform of the structures of higher education which begun taking place in the mid-2000s. In parallel to the Bologna developments, the Lisbon Strategy and the launch in 2000 of the European Research Area also affected higher education, although mostly through indirect coordination measures. Both these frameworks are drawn upon in the policy documents that justify the increased attention to a 'borderless higher education' (HSV, 2005: 18–19; SOU 2000:92).

Throughout the 2000s, the Swedish focus on quality and institutional autonomy increased, with a continued and even reinforced emphasis on decentralised governance and quality improvements, now consistent with the Bologna agenda on constructing comparability across HE systems and enhancing competitiveness (Kalpazidou-Schmidt, 2007). The 2005 *Widening Access reform* included strong political efforts to expand HE and provided a particular focus for the internationalisation activities in that decade. When the Government Bill 'New World – New University' was endorsed by the Parliament in 2005, it was no surprise that the focus was on new structures for education programmes and degrees, embedded within the wider policy framework of widening access. This 2005 Bill represents the first major and explicit internationalisation strategy for Swedish higher education and it clearly defines itself against the European HE frameworks (Govt. Bill 2004/05:162). In aligning with EHEA, the Bill legitimises the ambitious restructuring of the sector and continues on proposing measures that will construct Sweden as a knowledge economy and knowledge nation through a twin approach of high-quality education in universities, and the provision of 'lifelong learning for growth and justice' (Govt. Bill 2004/05:162: 26–27). This is consistent with Wihlborg's (2019: 136) assessment of the Bologna process as 'a strong driver of higher education in Europe', through voluntary coordination measures (see also Brøgger, 2016; Dakowska, 2019; Muller and Ravinet, 2008).

In the years following the publication of the Bill, the sector was reformed, with the Bologna process providing the core justification (Forstorp and Mellström, 2013). It aimed at both an increase in quality of HE but also increased mobility for students, nationally between universities in transition from basic to advanced level studies, and internationally through the possibility to transfer credits between degree programmes (Govt. Bill 2004/05:162).

The decentralisation reforms continued in the decade to come, and the period from 2005 to 2018 saw further legislation on increased institutional autonomy (SOU 2008:104). The government also commissioned investigations on the state of Swedish higher education in relation to international developments during this period. Sweden saw itself in danger of 'lagging behind' in the adoption of and response to European Union recommendations that would increase HE competitiveness, innovation and internationalisation in the sphere of research (SOU 2012:41). Several Commission reports (such as SOU 2006:7; SOU 2008:104; SOU 2012:41) engage intensely with the European frameworks of the Bologna and the Lisbon processes, with Sweden largely taking the role of a willing 'policy borrower', keen to follow recommendations that would increase the status of HE as an entrepreneurial, competitive and globally attractive one (see Quintans, 2015).

The 2005 national strategy *New World – New University* was included and revisited in the 2009 Bill 'Knowledge without Borders – Higher Education in the Era of Globalisation' (Govt. Bill 2008/09:175) and presented to the EHEA tri-annual reporting cycle regarding the Bologna process implementation (EHEA, 2012a). These strivings had a dual focus: first, to operationalise the new Bologna structures into Swedish higher education. This part included the formulation of policies that would make the sector comparable and clearer in its structures internationally, and followed the specifications of the three Bologna cycles of study. It also included the need for the adoption of the language but also practices of coherent objectives for first and second level courses across HE (expressed as 'expected learning outcomes' from courses).

A second major policy objective of the reforms of the 2000s concerned the previous drive for widening access, in particular targeting students of a lower socio-economic background by increasing both the number of institutions and study places, and lowering the thresholds to access university education. Consistent with calls from the Bologna processes (see London and Bucharest Communiqués, EHEA, 2007, 2012b) policy initiatives emphasised the persistence of socially skewed recruitment to higher education both in the first two cycles and even more so in doctoral training (Govt. Bill 2004/05:162), a trend that despite the policy efforts continued in the next decade (UKÄ, 2018: 10; cf. Orr and Hovdhaugen, 2014).

In 2011, tuition fees were introduced for students with citizenship in countries outside the EU/EEA, or Switzerland, whereas studying remained free of charge for all other students. As a result, the number of incoming non-EU students decreased by about 80% in the 2013/14 academic year, although the figures are increasing steadily every year since then (UKÄ, 2019). This decision came to be considered important for additional government commissions and follow-up in the decade to come.

Revisiting internationalisation: Layering new elements in a new strategy

In 2017, the government established a commission to propose: (a) a new internationalisation strategy for HE; (b) ways for students to gain international perspectives in their education 'at home'; and (c) measures to increase Sweden's attractiveness as a 'knowledge nation' and a 'study destination' – a task requiring a review of the application system and tuition fees for non-EU students. The produced reports SOU 2018:3 and SOU 2018:78 cover more than 800 pages in total and put forward a comprehensive range of recommendations. The first report (SOU 2018:3) outlined national goals for a new internationalisation strategy and the second (SOU 2018:78) focused on the 'branding of Sweden as a knowledge nation', by, for instance, increasing the visibility of the Swedish higher education sector. Proposals for better visibility abroad and better coordination among existing organisations and agencies in Sweden were also put forward. The tensions between regulating migration (driven by the Swedish migration policy) and the desire to attract high quality researchers and students (driven by the university sector) were also acknowledged (SOU 2018:78).

Taken together and compared to the 2005 Strategy, the 2018 reports represent a layered, gradual and important shift of emphasis in tone and vision for a national strategy, displayed as several elements being added on top of already existing ones. The latest strategy adds a strong drive for an assertive, comprehensive and systematic internationalisation of universities.

Shifts and continuities: The ideational dimensions of internationalisation

In this second part of the findings we focus on the ideational dimensions of internationalisation, including how it is defined, the priorities and goals it is promoted to serve, and the rationales provided for its implementation. We identify the logics for change in internationalisation practices, and the continuities with past and existing policy rationales.

Definitions and goals

The core emphasis of defining internationalisation in the two Swedish strategies remains largely unchanged. In 2005, the strategy adopted the definition provided by de Wit et al. (2015: 283), to deliberately integrate 'international, intercultural or global dimensions 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'. This definition was explicitly linked to issues of quality, as 'in essence, internationalisation is about quality' (Govt. Bill 2004/05:162: 26). In fact, quality is a concept that in both strategies is seen to permeate all the functions and operations of the university, acting both as the primary rationale for internationalisation, but also as its consequence through increasing international cooperation in education and in research (Govt. Bill 2004/05:162; SOU 2018:3).

In the 2005 Strategy it is recognised that even though mobility, primarily referring to students, has been the main focus of internationalisation, this is gradually shifting to encompass all activities under 'education' within the sector – with the Bill focusing mainly on the restructuring of education, to the exclusion of research. The increasing mobility in the global labour market provided a key justification, expressed as: 'Internationalisation of higher education in recent years is primarily linked to globalization of economy, the labour market, increased international mobility among people and an increased international dimension in many professions' (Govt. Bill 2004/05:162: 32). By 2018, the definition has widened, with the Commission adopting Hudzik's (2015) term 'comprehensive internationalisation' as:

> [a] commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives through the teaching, research and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units . . . it influences all of campus life as well as the institution's external frames of reference, partnerships and relations (SOU 2018:3: 32).

> Internationalisation is not an end in itself. The inquiry believes that internationalisation of universities and colleges has two primary aims, an internal: quality and an external: social development (SOU 2018:3: 112).

In this broader definition, the Inquiry is keen to emphasise three aspects of internationalisation that significantly expand the earlier 2005 focus and ambition. First, it is discursively presented as a mechanism that will strengthen both education and research. The connections between internationalisation

and education relate to the overall quality of undergraduate and postgraduate education, both described in terms of short- and long-term benefits and quality perspectives. Research, knowledge production and collaboration with international partners are seen as vital for the Swedish university sector but also the economy. Second, there are several references and arguments around internationalisation as an idea that should imbue 'all core activities' in and around higher education. So, it is argued that it should be applied to activities such as research in the private sector, knowledge innovation and transfers between academia and industry, and societal interactions connected to knowledge generation. Finally, in a specific address to the university sector leadership, the 2018 Strategy argues for an international perspective that permeates 'management and evaluation of higher education institutions at the national level' (SOU 2018:3: 8).

Attention is still, as in 2005, on an all-round view of quality, but the focus in 2018 is both broader and deeper, and the scope of the suggested activities now extends to integrating and operationalising internationalisation in all facets in and around HE. The goals of promoting understanding of other countries and of international contexts are not new, and have been present in HE legislation since 1977. The 2018 inquiry commission, however, moves the emphasis to further strengthen knowledge around sustainability and development (in the areas of health, economics, social justice, the environment and social welfare), build on solidarity with countries around the world, and to integrate these dimensions to all activities of teaching and research as part of a high-quality sector.

This multiplication of goals and functions for internationalisation compared to the 2005 Strategy does not only extend the links between university operations and the international context, but also makes horizontal connections between different national areas of policy, such as trade, foreign aid, development and migration. In this respect, the pursuit of internationalisation is a highly normative and cross-sectoral policy idea: It connects explicitly to higher quality provision in the spheres of education, research and their context, and it also maintains continuity and coherence with the long-standing ambition of the sector to perform global humanitarian and developmental objectives. But, the idea also has distinct cognitive functions in taking for granted the assumption that internationalisation is a positive sector goal. This justifies the claim that international perspectives should be mainstreamed in the evaluation and management of all HE institutions (SOU 2018:3: 8), thus discursively strengthening the potential of these ideas for their institutionalisation in university policies and practices.

Objectives and rationales for change

In 2005, setting up internationalisation goals and objectives was important for the process of taking part in international comparisons and for being noticed as a country active in such processes (Govt. Bill 2004/05:162). The 2005 Strategy recognised that in the earlier period (1970s–1990s), the main driving forces for HE reform were domestic, but now there is a need to 'turn a new leaf' (Govt. Bill 2004/05:162: 26) whereby international forces and internationalisation processes are acknowledged and acted upon in proactive rather than responsive ways. The Bologna process as the most important reference policy context, provided both the structure and framework for this to happen, as well as several discursive legitimations for launching significant reforms. It was argued that individual countries could retain their national distinctiveness in higher education and work in cooperation with other European systems to improve collective competitiveness, an objective that was seen to benefit both Sweden and Swedish students, and Europe as a political region. Internationalisation 'for quality', 'for economic competitiveness' and 'global attractiveness' are the three main rationales that underpin the suggested overhauling of the system supported by strong discourses of human capital investment in education.

The objectives in the 2005 Strategy follow closely the Bologna declaration objectives of promoting mobility, employability and competitiveness across Europe (Govt. Bill 2004/05:162: 36) and the main long-term objectives concerned the attractiveness of Sweden as a country with a high-quality university sector. This entailed the commitment for Sweden to become an attractive destination for foreign students through increasing the quality of education, the number of foreign students and academic staff, and the range of programmes and courses offered in English and other foreign languages. Second, it aimed for Swedish graduates to be attractive in national and international labour markets, a goal to be realised through incorporating international dimensions to the education of students, but also through the recognition of qualifications in labour markets across the EU. The strengthening employability and the promotion of 'understanding of other countries and international conditions' are also seen in relation to increasing the mobility of students, which brings benefits in terms of disciplinary expertise, personal and social skills, as well as contributing to international understanding and solidarity. The strategy was also ambitious in relation to university teachers' mobility, and argued that 'active internationalisation' should be considered as a pedagogical skill in cases of employment and promotions. In addition to the more instrumental objectives promoted by the 2005 Strategy, there is also significant emphasis on social objectives, such as widening access to higher education, promoted as deriving from internationalisation and its constituent dimension of interculturality:

> [an] increased proportion of the population is born outside the country's borders. When more and more people do not share a common cultural and ethnic background, it is also necessary to develop HE so that it is equally relevant regardless of student background. In a multifaceted society, the institutions of HE, through their tradition of international cooperation, should be the example of meeting people equally . . . inequalities are an asset because differences in background and reference frameworks require deeper reflection (Govt. Bill 2004/05:162: 28).

Further, the Bill identifies obstacles to internationalisation (mainly in relation to migration regulations, but also concerning the revision of undergraduate degrees) that need to be removed, and argues for a more systematic follow-up and evaluation of internationalisation activities.

Thirteen years after the publication of this Bill, the 2018 proposed strategy related the need for changes in the sector to an international reference context, characterised by increasing competition to attract knowledge and investment, and high intensity in various forms of mobility (people, information, resources). In a highly integrated globalised system of knowledge production and circulation, isolated internationalisation initiatives are not sufficient to facilitate the necessary transformations of the HE sector. The strategy proposal highlighted the need for improving Sweden's positioning in the world academic stage through international collaborations and education exports (SOU 2018:78). The 2018 documents do not relate to a specific external policy context (such as the Bologna process), but employ a set of rationales and objectives drawing on the opportunities and threats posed by globalisation more generally. Many of the emphases of the proposed 2018 Strategy continue on the same lines as in the 2005 Bill, with recurrent discourses around the creation of a knowledge nation and the improvement of quality in higher education.

There are, however, some distinct shifts. These refer to: (a) the proposal to integrate internationalisation across all aspects of HE management and operations, with new and developed evaluation and monitoring systems; (b) extending internationalisation rationales to research, research management and teaching; and (c) systematically studying and reforming aspects related to migration rules for students and researchers, and the financing of tuition fees for international students. With a new and strong emphasis on connecting research to education, the 2018 Strategy brings two additional layers of internationalisation to the national conversation about HE. First, the need for research to be at the heart of a government approach to HE nationally and internationally to serve

economic and social needs; and, second, the reinforced expectation that all students should benefit from internationalisation, not just the mobile ones. The research orientation is discursively connected to the EU and the Nordic frameworks of cooperation, and extends to strategic partnerships with countries beyond Europe (SOU 2018:3: obj. 5). The focus on education signals a strong dimension of 'internationalisation at home' with the expectation that universities integrate international and intercultural dimensions into the curricula, both formal and informal, so that all students experience the benefits of internationalisation, even if they cannot participate in mobility programmes (SOU 2018:3: 395).

Discursively, the 2018 Strategy is characterised by high degrees of confidence in the sector, and provides concrete proposals for removing structural barriers to internationalisation that are of a legal nature (particularly in relation to migration and people mobility), or refer to financial (increasing the amount of scholarships to cover tuition fees), and institutional obstacles (lack of coherent or coordinated approaches across the sector). Internationalisation is seen as both a contributor to higher quality of education and research, and as the outcome of a high-quality sector. In addition, even though there are several and significant references to intercultural and sustainability related purposes of HE, both 2018 reports also emphasise the instrumental objectives for the sector. One example of this instrumentality relates to commercial opportunities for Swedish universities (SOU 2018:3: 84). This is partly in tension to other formulations in the strategy, whereby the Swedish orientation is seen as closer to other European countries where HE is offered as a public good, and in contrast to 'Anglo-Saxon countries' where the practice of charging tuition fees to international students is a significant contributor to the national economy. Hence, the incentives to market the university sector to international students is primarily of a cultural nature and of longer-term instrumental purposes, rather than of a short-term financial gain:

> Swedish higher education institutions have a limited financial interest in increasing the proportion of students who pay tuition fees because the fee is only intended to cover the actual cost of the higher education institution, however there are other important driving forces (SOU 2018:3: 90–92).

Taken together, the shifts of emphasis between the 2005 and the 2018 strategies are incremental rather than fundamental, with new elements layered onto existing ones, and new international models gradually incorporated in the national strategies, resulting in partial displacements over time (cf. Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). The main rationales for pursuing internationalisation post-2005, and the discourses used to legitimise such efforts, draw primarily on the need to respond to globally competitive conditions, to build strong labour markets and to enhance the quality of the sector. The 2018 documents draw on formulations from earlier strategies and systematically build on existing rationales for improving the quality of higher education. These are then extended to the governance of the sector through concrete proposals to embed internationalisation in the management and evaluation of universities, as well as to develop 'internationalisation at home', and position HE as an integral part of other policy areas, including trade, foreign aid and migration. Following this layered approach of introducing partly new ideational dimensions and applications to already established ideas, the 2018 Strategy attempts to integrate internationalisation in the sector as well as in the workings of the government and its agencies within and beyond HE.

Concluding discussion

This article illustrates the dynamic interactions between the national, European and international contexts and policy ideas in the field of higher education, through the example of internationalisation policies. The relations between the domestic and external agendas and pressures are not easy to

disentangle, and the particular national priorities at any period of time very much shape the selective adoption of international policies or ideas.

The significance of this temporal/historical analysis is clear in the case of the Swedish internationalisation policies that took different forms in the mid-2000s as compared to the latest 2018 ones. In 2005, major reforms were driven by priorities to decentralise the system, change student finances, widen access to universities and introduce new accountability regimes. At the same time, membership of the European Union, the push for increasing participation in HE, and harmonisation through comparability of university qualifications and the Bologna process, have provided further steering but also legitimation for the particular reform of the sector. Similarly, the 2018 Strategy was produced at the end of a decade of reforms that saw the introduction of research performance-based state funding for universities, intensified institutional autonomy, a renewed emphasis on quality assurance systems and the introduction of fees for non-EU students. In comparison, this latter strategy reflects a more assertive discursive positioning of the sector at the international scene. Older, pre-existing commitments to 'the global' as an arena for HE action, and international solidarity with countries of the global South continue to exist, as newer objectives that clearly prioritise the competitiveness of the university sector are layered into the national strategy.

Both the 2005 and 2018 strategies thus reflect pre-existing national goals and directions for reforming HE, while at the same time being attentive to international opportunities and environments in ways that lend legitimacy to external contexts (Schriewer, 1990). Internationalisation has been used to mobilise changes in the sector that were already part of the changing organisation and governance of HE. In addition, the Bologna process provided a useful set of 'borrowable' structural changes as well as a source for legitimacy of the impending reforms, and a set of cognitive ideas that mapped the necessary political actions to implement them (Schmidt, 2008). In the later strategy, internationalisation acts not merely as a map for changing higher education to be more internationally oriented, but also as a policy idea that can transform HE into a national political asset. The 2018 Strategy includes elements of earlier strategies, layered with new functions and gradual displacements of ideas for structuring and sequencing of HE programmes.

Taken together, there is a gradual shift from more or less emulating external European models, to a more ambitious objective for Sweden to carve its own internationalisation path. Internationalisation is thus an adaptable idea that reaffirms previous directions and at the same time aids to repurpose higher education to serve economic functions, while attempting to keep 'alive' the traditional Swedish concerns around social justice, solidarity and sustainability.

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