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**Nordic Management & Business Administration Research
— Quo Vadis?**

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Abstract

This paper deals with the ongoing debate as to whether there is a Nordic research tradition in management and business administration. And if there is such a tradition, what are the characteristics of this way of academic thinking? The research question is particularly relevant due to the globalisation of trade and communication and the expansion of multinational companies, which have made management more observant of international trends, styles and cultures. Does global competition entail a global management style, or are there still some use in understanding and going deeper into regional/geographical management characteristics as a means of competition and thus, as a topic for research?

The empirical data is based on a survey study among the participants at the 15th Nordic Conference on Business Studies hosted by the Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration in Helsinki, August 1999. The study identifies some strong scholars in this research field, who dominate the learning processes by which research traditions emerge.

Based on this and earlier work we conclude that management and business administration research is diverse and fragmented. To integrate this field there is a drive towards integrative research methods like field- and case-studies and narrative perspectives.

Nordic Management & Business Administration Research

— Quo Vadis¹?

Introduction

Globalisation of trade and communication and the expansion of multinational companies have made management more dependent on international trends, styles and cultures. Does global competition entail a global management style, or is there still some points in understanding and digging into national management characteristics as means of competition and thus, as a topic for research?

This paper goes into that question by debating whether there is a Nordic research tradition within the management and business administration research fields. And if there is such a tradition, what are the characteristics of this way of academic thinking? To answer these questions, a literature study has been undertaken, and a survey study was made among the participants at the 15th Nordic Conference on Business Studies in Helsinki August 1999.

Such comparative aspects of management and business administration topics have been subject to some investigation in European studies during the last decades. This literature has focused both on the harmonizing and the differentiation factors among the different European geographical areas. The studies which are most cited, are those of Hofstede (1980, 1983, 1993) which focus on the influences of national culture on accounting system and management practices. National culture defined as “collective programming of the mind) (Hofstede, 1993) is found to play an important role in affecting the features of accounting practices and some aspects of management control processes within organizations (among others, see Granlund and Lukka, 1998; Shields, 1998).

Furthermore, literature in this field points at the relationships between management - accounting practices and business methods in geographical areas, and the

understanding of theory development, norms, action and education. Although there are several studies that address the existence of national traditions in these research fields, there are relatively few attempts to document closer and more systematic comparisons between different contexts of knowledge. The aim of this paper is to make a contribution to knowledge into this research area.

The paper is organised as follows: First, the concept of a Nordic research tradition is defined. The literature on contextual and cultural factors is broadly presented, and a theoretical framework is developed to analyse the research question. The empirical data is discussed and analysed, and implications are given for further research into this field.

The concept of management and business administration research

The diversity of disciplines

When raising this research question, one of the first challenges to be met is the problem of making a precise definition of the management research disciplines. The core professional academic competencies in management knowledge are research, teaching and practice. Given the wide focus of this field, management research is multidisciplinary, and as a multidisciplinary field it will be criticised for not being pure and disciplinary. In earlier literature in this field the concept Scandinavian management research has been used when describing the relevant research community. Engwall (1995) studied the first eight volumes of the Scandinavian Journal of Management (SJM) to address the question of multidisciplinary and fragmentation in management research: "Judging from the articles it seems that the SJM covers a somewhat wider area of research than Americans would include in "management". The journal has published articles in the area of "företagsekonomi", which is usually translated as "business administration" (Engwall 1995:233). This means that the articles have dealt with problems in accounting, marketing and organization. This *wide definition* of business administration implies that the degree of fragmentation is quite high in the Nordic research community. Other relevant expressions which cover parts of the research area are "business economics" (Zambon, 1996) and "management

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accounting” (Pistoni and Zoni, 2000). In this paper we choose to use the concept management research, which also includes the different sub-fields within business administration research.

If the Nordic management research is fragmented, composed of different fields without much cross-field interaction, we may expect to find a need in the research community to integrate this multidisciplinary field. One way to integrate is by using research methods that allow multi-perspectives and multi-methods to be joined in theoretical analyses. Consequently, Nordic management research can be characterised as field driven in search for more integrative knowledge, whereas the American tradition is much more theory driven (Van de Ven, 2000). Field studies are more holistic in their nature, and the analyses and understanding presuppose diversity in theoretical frameworks. A proposition put forward here is that a search for integration between research, teaching and practice characterises the Nordic researchers in the field, and that this search drives the researchers towards field-works and case studies.

Nordic Management research

Before going deeper into the discussion some further explanations should be made. First, one has to understand more about the nature of management practices and research. Managerial work was discovered as a kind of discipline in the years after the World War II (Carlson, 1951). In Sweden this history of management research started as “Handelsteknik” after the war, and it developed to “Företagsekonomi”, which is quite similar to the notion of business administration. As mentioned above, business administration includes a wider area of research than the American definition of management. Management research is traditionally defined as to include organisation theory and theoretical frameworks within psychology, sociology and knowledge management. The Norwegian word “bedriftsøkonomi” comprises all these different disciplines together with accounting, cost analyses, marketing, organisation, operation management, finance and management information systems. At the very beginning of the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration in 1936 and for the next twenty years, accounting and finance were by far the dominating disciplines. Thereafter, organisational psychology, administration and marketing were gradually introduced from 1960s and onwards (Nordström, 1994).

In the late 1960's there took place a shift from a classical, scientific management conception of business economics to behavioural theories of the firm (Jönsson, 1996). To a large extent this shift coincided with a generational shift of leading researchers. The theoretical perspectives were largely influenced by James March and Herbert Simon, who were the scholars most respected among the Nordic researchers. Together with this shift the tradition of keeping good access to field research sites have prevailed throughout the last century, and during the last decades academic management accounting research has taken increasingly behavioural flavour (Jönsson, 1996:445). Pioneering research based on organisational experiments emerged, where the use of accounting information was discussed in the practical contexts.

The same tendency seems to be observed also in Denmark, where “ a host of new lines of business education have been created to compensate for the functional specialisations, which many felt had become too narrow and out of step with business needs“ (Fivelsdal and Schramm-Nielsen, 1993:40). Also in this country the “Praktizimus” orientation of business life” is combined with theoretical approaches with built-in practice (Fivelsdal and Schramm-Nielsen, 1993:41).

In Finland the 1950's are described as a transitional phase, as the term accounting theories were broadened to also include management oriented ideas (Näsi & Näsi , 1997). Since the 1970's the influences from social sciences on research and teaching have increased. However, “...there has also been a genuine Finnish accounting doctrine, especially in financial accounting in the form of an indigenous accounting theory, but also in management and cost accounting, where the Finnish doctrine can be positioned somewhere between American and German doctrines. ” (Näsi and Näsi, 1997:223).

In a recently published study Engwall (2000) has analysed the two oldest business schools in each of the four Nordic countries with respect to foreign role models and standardisation of management and business teaching. The implications of that study is that Nordic business education in the 1990's reveals a strong US influence, while at the same time the schools exhibit certain national and even local features. Engwall proposes that as international deregulation continues, institutional differences can be expected to diminish (Engwall 2000: 19).

As observed by Carlson (1951) and Mintzberg (1973) managerial work is characterised by variety and fragmentation, and leadership studies show that managers seem to like verbal, face-to-face communicated information above analytical and quantitative reports. Leaders act in direct interaction with the environment. With this in mind we easily notice the multidisciplinary nature of management as an academic field. In a replication of Mintzberg's study, Tengblad (2001) concludes that Swedish CEOs reveal different patterns of behaviour compared to the original study: "The CEOs in the new study spent much more time on meetings with many participants..", and they allocated a considerably less proportion of time on decision-making, desk work and formal meetings, primarily subordinates (Tengblad, 2001:1). This recent study indicates that there has been a trend towards more integration within the managerial practices.

Some main characteristics

From the literature referred to above, the main characteristics of a Nordic research tradition may be summarised by stating that management studies started as book-keeping courses at specialised graduate schools and universities. In many respects, the further development in management research has followed the rise of the welfare state during the last 50 years. There has been a move away from beliefs in rules as an adequate means of managerial techniques and to the post modern society's trust in creativity and change as strategies for development and success. As an answer to these external changes in the society, the managerial disciplines have changed from using simple accounting rules to rely on complex metatheories on organisational behaviour and innovation. To day almost every academic institution offers a diversity of management programmes. Management research is being conducted at a large number of institutions throughout the Nordic countries, and management education is given at numerous business schools at both undergraduate and graduate levels. As the teaching systems are heterogeneous and fragmented, these characteristics can be expected to be relevant also for the population of management researchers.

There are hardly any dominating schools or paradigms in this field. Because there are few demands on researchers to confirm theories, rhetorics and fashion may be a vital part of the academic "catwalk"; a kind of theoretical puzzling (Kuhn, 1970).

Management research has some distinguishing characteristics which are different to that of the natural sciences, of which the most important may be that the researchers' focal study objects read their papers and reports, and therefore there is a kind of

symbiotic relationship between theory and practice. Practice gives rise to theories, and theories are input in managerial work. We may content that this symbiotic relationship is one special characteristic in management research. Furthermore, there is a tendency towards theory fragmentation in the field of Nordic academic management and business administration work. Furthermore, we have noticed a move towards standardisation of teaching in Nordic business schools and there are signs of integration in managerial practices. Then the next question to go further into in the following chapter is to discuss such trends within the practises of the research community

The development of a research tradition

Traditions and multi-disciplinarity

Education and schools of thought, which give inspiration for research, are constructed through a long-term social process where actors' views develop in interaction with one another. This social constructivist view on the evolution of research communities has been used to understand the creation and development of human institutions and education societies (Engwall, 2000:2). Tradition means passing on beliefs or customs from one generation to the next (Oxford reference dictionary, 1996). This passing on from one generation to another and between countries is made through symbols (words both written and spoken) and experiences/action. The beliefs and customs that are passed on in this way, can be observed as long established methods and practices. Tradition is created by words and action.

Consequently, a research tradition is created through processes of slow learning. New actors into the field get to know these research traditions by reading, listening to speech (at seminars and conferences) and by participation in discussions, which are the activities inhibited in the discourse of management research. The dominating doctrines will be the ones that have the greatest impact on tradition development. They will most strongly affect the travel of traditions as the newcomers into the research fields will adopt to the new analytic frameworks and doctrines. Those who advocate these doctrines are the "*leading stars*" during these research encounters. These "leading stars" are parts of professional networks, which Haas (1992) called *epistemic communities*. An epistemic community is a network of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain or issue area (Haas, 1992: 3). The presence of such

powerful experts (epistemic communities) will trigger the rise of new paradigms and frameworks on the research agenda. We can call this the process of management research discourse. The existence of a Nordic core tradition is affected by such epistemic communities. This aspect will be discussed in the empirical part of the paper.

The nature of research, research homogeneity and academic legitimacy

Research can be seen as constituted by social processes between a large number of individuals and not solitary work pursued by a small number of geniuses. These views are expressed by researchers such as Engwall (1996), Bordieu (1984) and Kuhn (1970). Research then implies competition between research groups to achieve support for their ideas and arguments. Engwall (1996) states that the degree to which networks and groups are structured, appears to vary across different disciplines. This phenomenon was discussed by Whitley (1984), when using a classification of scientific fields based on the functional and strategic dependencies among scientists and the technical and strategic uncertainty of the task. The most strongly integrated scientific field with high functional and strategic dependence between scientists and low technical and strategic task uncertainty, was labelled physics. On the other hand, management studies were characterised by low dependence and high task uncertainty, which is also called “fragmented adhocracy” (Engwall, 1996).

Management and business administration as a multidisciplinary field has for long struggled for academic legitimacy (Jönsson, in Engwall 1995:111). The legitimacy of a theory and a research field is reflected in its acceptance. If a large number of scholars are using a theoretical tool to guide their research, we may speak of a legitimate theoretical framework. When these schools of thought are accepted and developed in the research networks and advocated by members of the epistemic community, the researchers who participate in the networks, start to use the theoretical frameworks in analysing their empirical observations and data. In this process the epistemic communities; the “leading stars” are the vital drivers.

Even a brief review of contemporary management theory suggest that this discipline is composed of multiple, largely incommensurable theoretical frameworks or schools of thought (McKinley et al, 1999: 634). Rather than seeking “the truth” of a subject, the objective of a multi-paradigm form of inquiry is to foster a more comprehensive understanding. This in turn will have a tendency to increase the theoretical

fragmentation in the field. The need to integrate the theoretical diversity can be met by introducing more integrative research methods.

A school of thought in a research field is defined as an integrated theoretical framework that provides a distinct viewpoint on management and that is associated with an active stream of empirical research (McKinley et al 1999:635). Following this definition, the management research traditions integrate theoretical frameworks from economics, organisation and organisational behaviour, psychology and sociology. The management researchers often utilise constructs such as efficiency, transactions, power, resources, institutions, competition, legitimacy and the like. These constructs are broad and abstract. They are rife with ambiguity, and this ambiguity means that the constructs are subject to multiple interpretations (Weick, 1995). This gives rise to for more qualitative reflections such as the narrative methods (Czarniawska, 1997).

Since the late 1970's social sciences, including management studies, have been influenced by diverse theoretical perspectives. These perspectives allow questioning conventional approaches. Arguments about the nature of knowledge making were put forward in the late 1980's. The so-called *paradigm-war* (Weick, 1999) illustrates this, where not only the adequacy of theories is discussed, but also how the truthfulness behind these theories is constituted. Management theory probably has never had a unified paradigm, and there are evidences of movement toward more diversity in research methods rather than less.

The debate on Nordic management research

The Nordic Academy of Management

Since the early 1980s there has been a claim to Nordic paradigms or models in the area of management research. This claim was an important contribution to the establishment of the Nordic Academy of Management (Nordisk Företaksekonomisk Förening) as well as the launch of the Scandinavian Journal of Management (SJM) in 1984:

“The Journal should be an international journal of management studies with a special mission to present Scandinavian research to an international audience. The contents should reflect current research, and should not thus be restricted to any specific part of the management field” (Jönsson, 1987:163).

A debate on Nordic management research has later been going on in the newsletters of the Nordic Academy of Management (Nordisk Företaksekonomisk Förening - NFF-Nytt) from 1998 and onwards. The general impression is that the researchers in the field are characterised by having close relations with the practical business world, and that the research is relevant for corporations and organisations. Lindell (NFF- nytt 2000:1) points at the strong trend towards qualitative theory development as another characteristic of Nordic management research.

Several scholars have participated in this debate in the Nordic Academy newsletter following Jönsson's note that Nordic research traditions are problem focused and practice oriented rather than model creating (NFF nytt 1998:1). Also Mouritsen (NFF nytt 1998:2) points at the close relation to empirical matters. He states that one, however, should go beyond "common sense and empiricism" and make a more precise stand in terms of the theoretical use of the empirical material. Lindell argues (NFF nytt 1998:3) that there is a need to accumulate the rich number of case studies to create a more co-ordinated knowledge and theory development in the Nordic countries. Otherwise, he says, "all the case studies will become insulated islands of knowledge".

Sahlin-Anderson (NFF nytt 1998:4/5) focuses on the multidisciplinary characteristics of the management studies itself. If management science only develops multiperspectives without theoretical frameworks and developments, research might only mirror practices without relevant analysing models. Perhaps are there now signals showing a more fragmented discipline instead of a co-ordinated multidisciplinary field? Mellemvik (NFF nytt 1999:4) maintains that management science and research should be more innovative and proactive.

As can be seen from the brief overview above, the discussion about the national contexts of management theory and practice is relatively vital in the Nordic academic societies. The importance of national factors for management theory and practice can be analysed from different theoretical frameworks. Contingency theory considers such matters as technology, size and institutional factors more important than national culture (Hickson et al 1974). Hofstede (1993:1) defined management culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one category of people from another". This definition includes the elements of shared values, a common history and

the possibility of cultural transmission, which indicate that national and geographical contexts are important when studying management theories and practices.

Cultural elements on national levels were found to be important in relation to management styles (Lindell & Arvonen, 1996:12). At the end of the 1970s, the influence of national culture on management was confirmed in several studies (Hofstede 1980, 1983). Hofstede (1983) argued that nationality has implications on management because nations are political units rooted in history with their own institutions, educational, legal and labour market systems. Furthermore, informal organisations are culturally based, and psychological factors and common-sense way of thinking are partly influenced by national cultural factors with long rooted traditions in history. Values, beliefs, norms and ideals are embedded in the country's culture and may affect the management (leadership behaviour, routines, systems and practices) and goals and strategies of organisations.

Some authors have spoken about a kind of a "Viking way of thinking" (Czarniawska & Wolff, 1986; Engwall, 1996) because of the view that the Nordic countries tend to be relatively homogeneous. Consensus is considered a feature which characterises the Nordic countries through their ability to solve social problems peacefully (Lindell & Arvonen 1996:13).

In Lindell & Arvonen's survey study (1996:28) it was concluded that: "From the findings of this study, the Nordic management style can be characterised as planning and order, delegation of responsibility, friendship with subordinates and orientation towards innovations." This is to say that the Nordic management behaviour is more employee-oriented. Another conclusion was that national culture influences management behaviour. However, Nordic management behaviour is not homogeneous. But the aspects of culture and context are relevant for studying research traditions, because of the *symbiotic relationship* which we assume exists between practice and theories in the management fields.

Several authors have pointed at the importance of linking theory and practices in the management and business administration fields. According to Van de Ven (2000) the likelihood of making significant advances to management knowledge increases when researchers 1) confront questions and anomalies arising in management practice, 2)

conduct research that is designed in appropriate and rigorous ways to examine these questions, and 3) analyse and translate research findings not only to contribute knowledge to a scientific discipline, but also to advance the practice of management. As Kurt Lewin stated: “Nothing is so practical as a good theory” (Lewin et al, 1939). The implication of these statements is not solely to build a bridge between theory and practice, but it can also be formulated as to “theorize practice” (Czarniawska, 1999:7).

Consequently, we conclude that national contexts are important as frameworks for studying management research. Moreover, the practice of management knowledge is a complex and controversial theme, and it involves many subjects on its travel through the “knowledge supply chain” from the testing by academics, being taught to students by lecturers and instructors, adapted and diffused by consultants and - practiced by managers. On the travelling between countries, management research can become standardised and differentiated. One way to study this diffusion is to focus on the divide between academics and practitioners and analyse the degree of empirically based research made by the academics in the field.

The American dominance?

The relation between management knowledge in theory and practice is debated on an international scale. Van de Ven, the President of the Academy of Management in USA (the largest research community in the world) concludes that

“In all honesty, the Academy has been less successful in putting management knowledge into practice. I do not believe this is due to a lack of interest or commitment to the practice of management. On the contrary, in our interactions with students and managers we struggle each day with the challenges of developing and applying management principles in practice. Instead, I humbly submit that we do not adequately understand the practice of management in two respects: First, we have not found adequate ways to implement research knowledge into practice. Second, we have not figured out how academics, consultants and practitioners might co-produce management knowledge”.

Academy of Management News (Vol 31, No 3, December 2000)

This quotation gives us the strong impression that the American way of management research is less empirical than the Nordic, and that it struggles with linking theories and practice. As shown in the empirical part of this paper, this is one of the main differences this field between the American and the Nordic research traditions.

Other studies have shed light on the American influence in theory development and education. Citation data from published Nordic business research was studied by

Engwall (1995). For that purpose the structure of references in the first eight volumes of the SJM (1984-1992) was used in the analysis. The results made it possible to identify the most important references, and the characteristics of the references used in terms of age and author nationality. It appeared that organisation theory and especially the works of Richard M Cyert, James G March and Herbert A Simon were making a common base for the authors in SJM, and it was documented that the link to the North American research tradition was strong.

In a later study Engwall (1996) presents an analysis of the articles published by Nordic management scholars in the 15 most important business research journals during the period 1981-1992. The analysis showed that the predominance of North American scholars in these journals was massive. In the studied period almost nine of ten article authors were North American, which meant that there were 10% left for rest of the world (Engwall 1996:434). Consequently, the North Americans set the standards. As for the Nordic authors who counted for less than 1% of all the authorships, they were only outnumbered by native English speakers (UK and Australia). "As a result we could conclude that Nordic authors play the part of an important minority within an international journal market, which is dominated by North Americans" (Engwall 1996:435). The analysis also showed that the Nordic authors had a particular orientation towards organisational problems and a preference for a social science approach to accounting problems.

The American dominance in Nordic business schools was documented in Engwall (2000). This study of the most established business schools in the Nordic countries showed that text-books from North America constituted the largest group at all schools except from the Copenhagen Business School and the Gothenburg School of Economics. Here about one-third of the titles were North American.

One may assume that globalisation promotes an American way of thinking. Consequently, in the 1980's the concept "Nordic management" was introduced to contrast the dominating American paradigms in the theoretical fields (Furusten & Kinch, 1996). There was an argument that the dominance of management thinking originating in the United States might result in a general convergence in the words, concepts, exemplification and rhetoric on managerial issues. In this present study we cannot empirically evaluate a management research tradition according to any

international standard, and there is no possibility to characterise the Nordic way of thinking and doing compared with an Anglo-Saxon way, a German or an American way of research traditions. However, some main trends and reflections can be made as to the characteristics of the Nordic management research.

The empirical study

In this section of the paper we will discuss the empirical data according to our frames of references. First, the analytic framework is presented. Then a former Swedish study is briefly recapitulated. Thereafter the survey is presented as follows: The context and the characteristics of the population of management scholars are discussed. The areas of the researchers' interest in research topics and their methods of research are spelled out. The last section of the empirical part presents the networks, the future developments and trends, main theories and drivers. Especially we focus on the existence of "leading stars" as drivers in the development of analytic frameworks and doctrines.

The analytic framework

An important framework for discussing the population of Nordic researchers is the shared characteristics within this population. This sharing of characteristics can be defined as a sharing of culture, as sharing of sets of social constructed phenomena and symbols and the mentally copying of the works and thoughts formulated by the existence of "the leading stars" in the research population. Furthermore, contingency factors such as educational background, different contexts such as research funding, wages and organisation of work are among relevant elements to gain deeper insight into the variety of research traditions in the Nordic countries.

The research questions are addressed in an earlier work based on a survey made in 1983 to evaluate trends within Swedish management research (Jönsson, 1984). Responses were received from 53 researchers in a population of 77. Organisational theory, management control and industrial marketing were considered by the respondents to be the strong areas, whereas marketing, management science, accounting and finance were considered to be weaker. A majority of the researchers were dissatisfied with their working conditions, mainly due to lack of time for doing research, which was caused by the pressure from managing a growing field in education.

The most popular research areas among the researchers in 1984 were the studies of processes in institutional decision-making. The most often mentioned priority for future research areas were that of negotiated economy, international aspects on different fields and the impact of computer technology on all kinds of organisational life (Jönsson 1984:26). The international sources of inspiration seemed to confirm the image of Swedish management research as being primarily interested in the control problems of organisations. Professor James March at the Stanford University was the most frequently mentioned source of inspiration.

The respondents to that survey mentioned some Nordic researchers who emerged as opinion leaders within the research fields. In order to exhibit the research done within the growing areas of management studies, the new journal (Scandinavian Journal of management) was considered to be a promising enterprise. Our 1999 survey presented in this paper is in many respects a follow-up of the 1983-survey.

Research trends

From a focus on the techniques of business administration and the practical knowledge, the study of business organisation gradually became a priority from the late 1960s (Engwall, 1995: 398). This trend seems to be valid for all the Nordic countries, as it can be illustrated by the categories of papers submitted to the Nordic Conferences on Business Studies (Nordic Academy of Management) in Bodö 1997 and Helsinki 1999, see appendix 1, table 1. Table 2 in appendix 1 the thematic approach of the Nordic Academy of Management meeting in Uppsala 2001 is outlined. We observe that the conference papers are organised differently from the last two conferences in 1997 and 1999.

In the years from 1997 to 2001 there is a development from a disciplinary approach to a thematic approach, showing the great diversity in this research field. It also shows the somewhat conflicting relationship between the functional disciplines of the teaching part of this field and the more multidisciplinary research traditions. In this field the classic subdivision of research into disciplines is mostly based on the teaching tradition: Education follows the corporate functional structure: Marketing, accounting, production, human resource management and so on, whereas research is more multidisciplinary, cross-functional and thematic.

An analysis made of the papers at the Helsinki conference (Lindell, NFF nytt 2000:1) showed that about 70% of the papers were in the empirical and qualitative field². This contributes to the assumption that the Nordic research tradition is rooted in empirical and qualitative works, and that there is a trend from a disciplinary focus to a more thematic approach. However, the diversity of themes will face a need for integration of knowledge and theoretical reflections. The researchers' diverse observations will be shared at the conferences as stories based on several research methods, which open for many perspectives. As such, the Nordic Academy of Management meetings are important meeting places for researchers to communicate their insights, and these meetings promote a kind of shared knowledge within the field.

The population of researchers

The purpose of this survey is to investigate management research in the Nordic countries. A questionnaire was sent to the 352 Nordic participants at the 15th Nordic Conference on Business Studies hosted by the Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration in Helsinki, August 1999. 178 respondents returned the questionnaires. However, thirteen of these respondents were removed after careful consideration of missing data problems. The final sample is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Final population and number of received questionnaires for each country.

Country	Population	# of respondents	Answer %
Denmark	15	9	60
Finland	72	33	46
Norway	43	22	51
Sweden	222	101	46
Total	352	165	47

The survey is based on a questionnaire divided into four main categories, each including several questions of which some are measured by several items:

² The population was a selection of the 30 first received papers, which compares to 20% of the total number of papers.

1. **Contextual elements.** General information about the respondents (15 questions): Information relating to this theme is age, gender, country of employment, annual salary as well as issues relating to the respondents' academic position and history.
2. Information about the **respondents' research** (10 questions, 54 items) including the respondents' main area of research, methodological approaches and research co-operation are included in this category.
3. **Trends** in the respondents' main area of research (5 questions, 19 items). Here we asked the respondents to suggest what they believed would be the future development and problems within their main area of research.
4. **Trends in Business Administration research** (5 questions). The respondents were asked the Business Administration scholars they considered to lead the way in the next decade (at a national, Nordic and international level), as well as their prospects for Nordic Business Administration research in the future.

The results of the survey study are given in Appendix 2 tables 1-7. The questionnaire and a complete description of the study are published in a working paper (SiB Workingpaper, 3/2001).

Characteristics of the sample of management scholars

We do not claim that the population in this survey is representative for the complete community of researchers in this field. We have taken a "snap-shot" at one important meeting place which act as an important market for exchanging views and developing research. However, the participants at the conference can be characterised as very informed informants, and they share some common characteristics which we define as belonging to a Nordic research tradition.

In the sample of management scholars, the average age is 42 years (average year of birth is 1957, see Appendix 2, table 1). There is a considerable difference in salary between the management scholars of the four countries. The highest average wage is in Denmark, with Norway, Sweden and Finland following behind³.

All the Danish management scholars that took part in the survey are male. In Norway and Sweden about 24 per cent are female, while in Finland slightly more than 50 per

³ When comparing wages one can alternatively use average for professors and associate professors. This might give more comparative information.

cent of the management researchers are female. In total 30 per cent of the management scholars at the Helsinki conference were female. When it comes to current academic position, about 50 per cent of the management scholars from Denmark, Finland and Norway are professors or associate professors, while these two groups constitute 34 % of the Swedish sample. The research associates, normally PhD students, constitute about one third of the sample from Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

At this meeting in Helsinki, the participants from Sweden counted for about 60%. On the whole, this indicates a very strong Swedish influence in this research field. Perhaps we can talk about the Swedish research tradition?

Areas of researchers interest

Within the area of main interest there is considerable variation between the management scholars of the four countries. The largest main area of interest is the field of organization theories; see Appendix 2, table 2. Slightly more than 35 per cent indicates this to be a main area of interest. About 13 per cent are mainly interested in marketing, closely followed by accounting (12 percent) and entrepreneurship (10 per cent). One notice that the traditionally more quantitative areas of economics and finance are only to a very small degree indicated as being a main areas of interest. This absence of researches in economic and finance might be due to the fact that a disciplinary conference of finance was arranged at the same date as the Nordic Conference on Business Studies in Helsinki August 1999.

Time spent on research and research funding

The researchers were asked to distribute 100 points for the relative distribution of time spent on different tasks today and similarly relative time spent three years ago, Appendix 2, table 3. Included in table 3 is also the population of doctoral students. On average, the relative distribution of time to research has increased from 46.8 to 54.9 during the last three years. Time spent on teaching has decreased, and so has time spent on administration and other activities.

Research activity is mostly funded and included as a part of the researchers academic position (on average 58%). About one-third of the research resources stems from research grants (from public research councils and so on), while only a small proportion is granted from private companies and businesses.

Research methodology

A research tradition is, to a large degree, defined by the research methodology that the researchers use. Inspection of table 2 below shows that in Denmark, Finland and Sweden the emphasis is more on using qualitative methodology rather than quantitative methodology. The management scholars in these three countries seem to be similar to each other when it comes to the choice of research methodology. In Norway the emphasis is significantly different. Here the researchers tend to use more quantitative methodology. This may be due to the fact that a greater percentage of Norwegian professors have been educated in U.S.A., or that the Norwegian tax system favours researchers that choose to take their sabbatical in the U.S.A. rather than going to an other country.

Table 2: Researchers use of research methodology

Research methodology ¹	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Total
Qualitative research	4.67	4.33	3.27	4.49	4.30
Quantitative research	2.56	2.64	3.64	2.25	2.53

Notes

¹ Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale ranging from 1 to 5 if they used the following research methods.

1 indicates 'strongly disagree' and 5 indicates "strongly agree". Average number presented.

Research networks

Management scholars in Finland seem to work slightly less alone than their other Nordic counterparts, Appendix 2, table 4. Researchers in Norway, Denmark and Sweden appear to be more like lonely wolves. Danish management scholars participate more in nationally embedded research projects than the researchers of the three other Nordic countries. Finnish researchers report to participate more in Nordic embedded research projects. Researchers of all the four Nordic countries appear only to a very limited degree to participate in EU embedded research projects. Interestingly it is to notice that Norwegian researchers seem to work as much as their Nordic colleagues in EU projects, although Norway not being a EU member. When it comes to internationally oriented research projects there are very slight differences between the researchers within the four countries. Researchers from Finland participate in these types of projects more than average for these countries.

Co-authoring and publishing

About 70 % of the management scholars co-author with colleagues from their own institution. The greatest variations here is between Sweden and Denmark, see Appendix 2, table 5. When it comes to co-authoring with colleagues from other national institution, there are large differences between the scholars of these countries. About 70 % of the management researchers that come from Norway and Denmark co-author with colleagues at national institutions, while the percentage is far below in the two other countries.

Co-authoring with colleagues from academic institutions of another Nordic country is not so usual. Relatively, the Norwegian researchers work more with Nordic colleagues (36%), while the percentage is below 20 for the other countries. Interestingly it is to notice that co-authoring with colleagues from institutions outside the Nordic countries is more common. 42 % of the Norwegian researchers report to have co-authored with colleagues from outside the Nordic countries, and an average is 34% for the Nordic researchers on the whole.

The publishing activity among the Nordic researchers the last three years was measured in terms of number of conference papers presented, number of articles published in peer reviewed journals, number of books or articles in books and articles in non-peer reviewed journals, see Appendix 2, table 6. On average, a Nordic researcher has presented 6.3 conference papers, published about 2 peer reviewed articles, almost 2,7 books or articles in books and 1.7 articles of other kinds (during a three years period). There are some main differences between the countries, which indicate that the Finnish present relatively more conference papers, the Norwegians more peer reviewed articles – and the Finnish write more books and other kinds of articles.

During a year Nordic researchers on average present 2 conference papers, publish 1-2 peer reviewed articles and 1 book/book article. This somewhat low rate of publishing among established researchers may be explained from the tendency to do empirical work based on field and case studies, which are more time consuming than research based on quantitative data.

The leading stars and the discourse of research

Most researchers believe that the general public interest in their research area will increase. Here the Norwegians are the most optimistic, see Appendix 2, table 7. The same positive future belief holds for the status of the academic interest and interest in theory development in the field. The scores are gradually decreasing for the belief in increasing academic interest in methodological aspects and practical implications, as well as for the possibilities for increase in the research funding in the research area.

Development and trends in management research imply the passing on of beliefs and the spreading of new ways of thinking and new paradigms and frameworks. This process of management research discourse is strongly affected by those scholars who actively participate in the research networks by writing, teaching, reviewing, editing and discussing. This academic vitality will be noticed by the research community as those scholars – on national and international levels – who will be likely to lead the academic way in the next years and decades to come.

The respondents were asked to mention the names of the most important scholars within the field on the national and the international level. Altogether, 88 different names were listed by 58 respondents. Those scholars who scored highest on this ranking list, were mentioned by respondents from all the Nordic countries. These scholars represent a great diversity in the field as to both theoretical aspects, research methods and areas. However, their dominating theoretical perspectives are built on organisational theories and on qualitative methods. The list of the most frequently mentioned Nordic scholars is heavily dominated by Swedish researchers, which of course partly may be due to the large Swedish group of researchers who participated at the Helsinki conference. However, names of scholars from all the Nordic countries were mentioned among “the leading stars”.

On the list of the most well-known scholars rated as leading in the international community of researchers, also some Nordic scholars are mentioned. But the list is dominated by foreign superstars like Karl A Weick, Bruno Latour, Andrew Pettigrew, John Meyer, Henry Mintzberg. The list of the 17 international leading scholars shows a heavy dominance of Americans followed by Swedes. The list also includes researchers from UK, France, Denmark, Japan and Canada. The far most impressive observation

from these lists made by a very informed, but not representative group of Nordic scholars, is the outstanding position of professor Barbara Czarniawska. She is the far most frequently mentioned scholar and the leading star both on the Nordic and international levels.

When summing up the discussion about the leading stars in this field of research, the conclusion is that this list is heavily dominated by scholars within institutional theory. Most of the scholars work with organization theory, but scholars within strategy, entrepreneurship and industrial marketing are also included. Most of the Nordic scholars belonging to the group of “leading stars” are known to have been frequent visitors to Scancor and the research activity inspired by among others professor James March at Stanford University. This cross fertilisation of academic thinking between North America and the Nordic countries, dominated by the Swedish scholars, is one main conclusion which can be drawn from this survey study.

Findings, discussion and implications

Main empirical findings

A brief overview of the findings indicate that the main area of current Nordic research was 37% in organisation, 13 % in marketing and 12% in accounting. Self reported time spent on research has (on average) increased during the last three years, while time spent on teaching and other tasks has declined relatively (doctoral students are included here). The researchers use mainly qualitative research methods, and research is mainly funded as a part of academic position (57%) and external research grants (26%). Researchers think that research funding will be at a constant level in the time to come.

The researchers generally use empirical studies, mostly field studies which is used as basis for theory development. Researchers tend to work alone with a minimum of Nordic embedded studies. However, researchers are somewhat more internationally oriented. On average, during the last three years the respondents have each published 6.3 conference papers, 2 articles in peer reviewed journals, 2.7 books or articles in books and 1.8 articles of other kinds.

There are some influential scholars defined as the “leading stars” within the research fields. Among these, Barbara Czarniawska is the most outstanding. These “stars” constitute epistemic communities which are dominant in the theory development. We find strong influences from North American Scholars, and the Swedish dominance is heavy in this research field.

Discussion and implications

The main topic in this paper has been the discussion of a Nordic tradition in management and business administration research and what characteristics that can be found. The motivation for going into this discussion, is that the Nordic countries are relatively homogenous. They are characterised by somewhat equivalent political, moral and social sentiments. They have relatively equal climatic conditions, a common history and all countries, except Finland, basically speak the same Nordic language. The countries are affluent with large public sectors and flat management structures. Along the line with research that emphasises the importance of paying serious attention to such national context in managing organisations (see e.g. Engwall, 2000; Hickson & Pugh, 1995) we believe that such national contexts matter when producing management and business administration research.

The analyses do not go deeply into the contextual and cultural frames for the researchers in the Nordic countries, and we do not claim that our empirical study is representative as to the whole population of Nordic researchers. The data are gathered as a “snap-shot” taken during the meeting in the 15th Nordic Academy of Management in Helsinki 1999, and the population consists of well informed respondents. Our findings confirm the earlier works that have found a Nordic tradition built on empirical and qualitative research. There is a symbiotic relation between academic work and practise.

The Nordic research community shares a research tradition built on empirical and qualitative methods, and the theoretical frameworks are mainly found in the diverse perspectives in organisational theories. This is a kind of shared social construction of research reality developed during the years of the diversification of business administration and management disciplines from the 1970’s and onwards.

The existence of some leading scholars in the field and the dominance of institutional theory perspectives indicate that the management research discourse is being affected by these members of the epistemic communities. When studying the development of a Nordic research tradition, one should not underestimate the effect of copying and sharing of symbols as important elements in the learning process by which research traditions emerge. The development of new theoretical frameworks are easier legitimated and accepted when there are strong scholars who are associated with these frames of references. Professor Barbara Czarniawska is the most outstanding scholar at the Nordic and international level. This ranking mirrors the effect of vital activity in writing, giving seminars and supervising doctoral students.

We found a fragmentation between theoretical frameworks and teaching disciplines. This fragmentation seems to be dealt with by scholars using integrative research methods such as the narrative perspectives based on case study methods and field analyses. The narrative mode of knowing is gaining a growing relevance for organisation studies (Czarniawska, 1999). The coexistence of the logico-scientific mode and the narrative knowledge changes the task of the researcher to tell good stories instead of a normative position of telling the practitioners what to do. "In a good story, the events are its facts, and the point is its theory. A story without a point is meaningless; so are field reports that are not informed by theoretical insight" (Czarniawska, 1999:15). From this perspective, narrative knowledge is a means of bridging the gap between theory and practice. The important question which remains in our perspective, is how the knowledge from separate narratives can be integrated to gain deeper insight into the fragmented field of management and business administration.

Field studies are time consuming projects, and the process of writing and publishing is more ambiguous than in the more normative parts of the research methods. This can be an argument for the observation that Nordic researchers are slower publishers than the Americans, and that they relatively write more books than peer reviewed articles on their cases and stories. The difference between USA and the Nordic academic fields is also very much due to the different incentive structures. In the USA the dominant logic is "publish or perish". There are very few possibilities for automatic tenure, whereas in the Nordic countries the linkage between publishing activity and tenure is much weaker.

To follow up this study, in-depth interviews should be made with some of the leading scholars in the field to understand more of what constitutes the elements of this tradition that build the Nordic academic community in management and business administration research.

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APPENDIX 1**Table 1: Research themes - a comparison between the Bodø and the Helsinki Nordic Conferences on Business Studies⁴**

Themes	Bodø, 1997		Helsinki 1999	
	Number	%	Number	%
Book presentation	13	6.4	-	
Cyber	-		4	2.0
Eastern Europe	10	4.9	-	
Efficiency	10	4.9	-	
Entrepreneurship	8	3.9	13	6.6
Environment	3	1.5	-	
Ethics	3	1.5	-	
Financial Accounting / Accounting	7	3.4	20	10.2
Finance	3	1.5	-	
Gender	6	3.0	6	3.0
Health	-		5	2.5
Hospital Track	23	11.3	-	
Virtual organisations (track)	-		7	3.6
Innovation	10	4.9	-	
International business	-		6	3.0
Knowledge / knowledge/learning	9	4.4	9	4.6
Leadership	-		14	7.1
Management Accounting	12	5.9	-	
Management and Philosophy (track)	-		15	7.6
Marketing	14	6.9	18	9.1
Method	-		3	1.5
Network	-		5	2.5
Organisation	28	13.8	23	11.7
Personel	-		5	2.5
Public Sector	16	7.9	9	4.6
Sence making	-		3	1.5
Travvelling of moderen management ideas (track)	-		15	7.6
Strategy	11	5.4	15	7.6
Teaching Methods / Pedagogy	17	8.4	2	1.0
Total	203	100.0	197	100.0

⁴ There are several specialised conferences on finance, innovation, strategy and so on. This indicates that the population of researchers and research communities are greater than we have been able to include in this paper.

Table 2: Themes for the Uppsala conference on Business Studies August 2001:

1. Projects and organising
2. IT: knowledge's maid or its master
3. Networks and entrepreneuring, virtual and intangible- What happens with the images of organisations in the new economy?
4. Knowledge in organisations
5. Co-operation and Competition
6. What is going on here?" / "What the hell is going on here!" – Micro--processes in managerial work
7. Research on the Management and Organizing of Hospitals and Health Care
8. Mergers – the ontology and epistemology of changing
9. Globalization, state and business
10. Pacioli's swan song –Accounting for intangibles in the "new " economy
11. Nordic Contributions to International Business Studies
12. Trade
13. Accounting and entrepreneurs
14. Organisations- rules and management
15. Universities and entrepreneurship
16. Quality in first-degree theses in business studies
17. Exsternal finansing of education
18. Education and management business administration
19. Employability – The relation between education in management and practices
20. Uniformity and Diversity in Organising

APPENDIX 2**Table 1 The sample of management scholars – some characteristics**

Characteristics	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Total
Average year of birth	1958	1960	1958	1956	1957
Average salary ¹	382,700	241,208	296,952	305,099	294,876
Gender					
Male	9	16	17	74	116 (70.3 %)
Female	0	17	5	27	49 (29.7 %)
Current academic position					
Professor	2	12	4	18	36 (23.1 %)
Associate Professor	3	4	7	16	30 (19.2 %)
Assistant Professor	1	12	3	21	37 (23.7 %)
Research Associate	3	5	8	37	53 (34.0 %)

Notes

¹ Average salary is stated in SEK. From NOK to SEK = (NOK * 0,9941). From DKK to SEK = (DKK * 1,065414). From FIM to SEK = (FIM * 1,32866).

Table 2: Areas of researchers' interest

Main area of interest	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Total
Accounting	1	1	6	12	20
Economics			3		3
Entrepreneurship		3	1	12	16
Finance				2	2
Human resources			1	5	6
International business	2	4	1	2	9
Informatics				1	1
Management science		4	1	4	9
Marketing	1	7	1	12	21
Organization	3	12	5	40	60
Strategy		2	3	6	11
Other				5	6

Table 3: Time spent on research and sources of research funding

Main area of research	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Total
Average no. of academic working hours per week	42.22	44.69	40.95	44.64	44.03
Time spent on research today	50.00	50.63	61.00	55.47	54.89
Time spent on teaching today	30.56	26.09	21.45	25.86	25.62
Time spent on adm. today	18.89	16.09	17.55	15.36	15.97
Time spent on other act. today	0.56	6.88	0.00	3.32	3.46
Time spent on res. 3 years ago	31.25	40.69	46.00	50.27	46.83
Time spent on teach. 3 yrs. ago	22.50	26.21	28.00	28.72	27.81
Time spent on adm. 3 years ago	32.50	17.41	16.00	14.40	16.16
Time spent on oth.act. 3 yr ago	1.50	15.00	10.00	6.52	8.37
Research funded as a part of the academic position	88.89	59.70	58.64	54.13	57.76
External funding from research grants	8.89	26.67	27.05	26.68	25.75
External funding from companies/businesses	0.56	8.64	4.55	5.65	5.82
External funding from public sources	1.67	3.79	9.77	8.55	7.38
Other research funding sources	0.00	1.21	0.00	4.65	3.08

Notes

¹ The respondents were asked to distribute 100 points for the situation today as well as for 3 years ago.

² The respondents were asked to distribute 100 points among the research fund sources.

Table 4: Research networks

Research networks ^{1,2}	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Swede n	Total
I usually work on my research alone	3.17	2.81	3.21	3.11	3.07
I participate in nationally embedded research projects	3.67	2.90	3.29	3.02	3.07
I participate in Nordic embedded research projects	2.00	2.30	2.21	2.03	2.11
I participate in EU embedded research projects	2.17	1.85	2.21	2.00	2.01
I participate in internationally embedded research projects	2.33	2.67	2.36	2.25	2.36

Notes

¹ Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale ranging from 1 to 5 if they agreed in the statements.

1 indicates 'strongly disagree' and 5 indicates "strongly agree". Average number presented.

² **Doctoral students are not included in the analysis.**

Table 5: The pattern of co-authoring

Co-authored with colleagues ¹	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Total
From my own institution	100.0 %	81.0 %	64.3 %	62.9 %	68.9 %
From another institution within the same country	66.7 %	35.0 %	71.4 %	41.9 %	46.1 %
From an academic institution in another Nordic country	16.7 %	15.8 %	35.7 %	19.4 %	20.8 %
From an academic institution outside the Nordic countries	33.3 %	30.0 %	42.9 %	33.9 %	34.3 %

Notes

¹ Doctoral students are not included in the analysis.**Table 6: The pattern of publishing**

Research co-operation ¹	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Total
No. of presented conference papers	5.00	8.43	7.36	5.52	6.33
No. of articles published in peer reviewed journals	1.67	3.15	3.29	1.39	2.02
No. of published books or articles in books	2.00	3.75	2.64	2.47	2.72
No. of published articles in managerial journals	1.33	4.30	2.21	0.87	1.76

Notes

¹ Doctoral students are not included in the analysis.**Table 7: Perceived significant trends for the future development in the main area of respondents' research during the next decade**

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Total
General public interest in this research area is increasing	3.88	4.09	4.23	4.03	4.06
Academic interest in this research area is increasing	4.00	4.33	4.18	3.78	3.96
Academic interest in theory development in this area is increasing	4.00	4.09	4.00	3.70	3.84
Academic interest in methodological aspects in this area is increasing	3.38	3.70	3.45	3.33	3.43
Academic interest in practical implications in this area is increasing	3.50	3.66	4.18	3.40	3.57
Public interest in practical implications in this area is increasing	3.88	3.91	4.32	3.86	3.93
Possibilities for research funding in this area is increasing	4.25	3.64	3.82	3.35	3.52

Notes

¹ The respondents were asked to indicate what are the current trends that they think are significant for the future development of the research in their main area of research. 1 indicates strongly disagree, and 5 indicates strongly agree.