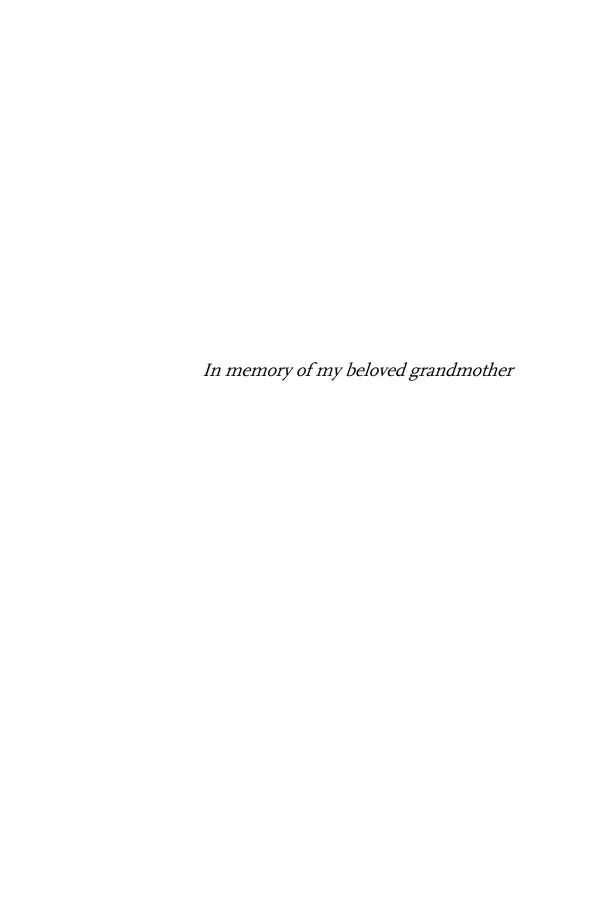# BROAD ENTRANCE – VAGUE EXIT

The trajectory of Political Science students through higher education into work life

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In memory of my beloved grandmother

Contents

This thesis consist of following four articles, which will be referred to in the text by their respective Roman numerals:

Study I – *Learning to play the seminar game: Some students' initial encounter with a basic working form in higher education*

Study II – *The two faces of political science studies; junior and senior students' thoughts about their education and their future profession*

Study III – *From senior student to professional novice: Learning trajectories in Political science, Psychology and Mechanical engineering*

Study IV – *Learning for an unknown context; a comparative case study, Swedish and Polish political science students' experiences of the transition from university to work life*

Introduction

Higher education from a student and societal perspective

I think we all remember the first day at school, a tickling feeling in the stomach, an anxiety for what you will encounter. Even if it was a long time ago the memory is still close to many of us. Entering higher education may perhaps also bring such memories to the surface. The choice to enrol in higher education is not always an easy one. One may have to move, find a new place to stay, get acquainted with a new town, and make new friends. A new phase in life starts where the main goal is to learn and pass the exams so you can finance your studies. But not too far into the future a new transition is waiting. After the studies one is looked upon as an independent adult prepared to enter work life. The journey continues towards new destinations. This journey is the focus of this thesis. The aim is to describe Political science students' experiences from the first moment at university to after one year in work life. Focusing on the students' experiences of their education and their images of the future work life as well as their experiences thereof. By investigating students' reflections on their current situation using a cross-sectional as well as a longitudinal design their journey through university to work life can hopefully be better understood. The studies presented in this thesis are contemporary accounts by different groups of students in different phases of their studies and in work life.

The first article is an observational study focusing on the students' first meeting with the university. The theme is the negotiation of the aim and meaning of the seminar. Article number two explores junior and senior students' thoughts about their present education and how they envisage their future professional life. Article three aims to give a national comparative dimension, comparing Political science students' transition from university to work life with two other groups of students enrolled in programs of Mechanical engineering and Psychology. The fourth and last article is an international comparative study between Sweden and Poland comparing the transition from higher education to work life and emphasizing their learning experiences.

The research area of higher education is a fairly young one. Schwarz and Teichler (2000), argue that only a few decades ago research on higher education was still sparse.

> For example, a book on the state of higher education research in Germany published in 1984 referred in the introduction to the wide spread saying that professors conduct research about everything except the university (Schwarz and Teichler, 2000 p. 2).

Even though the area of research in higher education seems to establish itself as an important research field there are still issues that needs to be considered. Furthermore they claim that there is a variety and heterogeneity of institutional bases. This can cause problems in the communication within higher education and render difficulties when summarising the state of the art in the area. The division between research on higher education and other activities such as reflection and information gathering tend to be blurry (Schwartz and Teichler, 2000). Another problem, somewhat different from the one described above but still important is the massification of higher education. Today everyone is "expected" to study in order to get a job or just to improve oneself. The Swedish government has set as a goal that 50 per cent of a cohort shall attend institutions of higher education and the institutions shall provide more study places in higher education for the natural sciences and engineering. A more general objective is to increase the social and ethnic diversity of higher education. The number of students has increased from 16,000 in 1950 to over 330,000 in 1999. The reform of higher education in Sweden, 1977, extended the definition of higher education and the number of students' increased further. In 2005 the number of students were 337 415 and the degrees awarded was 57 099 and there were 18 639 active postgraduate students. Today there are around fifty institutions of higher education run either by the government, regional authorities or private actors (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, 2005).

A goal for the nations in the European Union is to plan and harmonise their systems of higher education, for instance when it comes to the length of educational programs, grading and quality assurance. Such a harmonised system is expected to facilitate student – and staff – mobility within Europe. A possible way of understanding the European Commission's work in harmonising higher education is to link this process to what Barnett (2000), calls a super complex world. According to Barnett, we are living in a world that is developing very rapidly, and the individuals are overflown with information, facts and data of different kinds. The tricky question is how to bring order to such a complex world. Knowledge is presumably a good tool for dealing with such a complexity. An additional issue is that of self-identity, meaning that one need to keep a core of oneself intact through a compression of time and space and another objective is action i.e. encouraging the individual to take on more responsibility for their own actions (Barnett, 2000). Furthermore, he argues that these challenges can also be seen in work-life, indicated by the language use.

The terminology includes words such as flexibility, adaptability and self-reliance. To correspond to these post-modern demands the individuals find themselves urged to take on the responsibility for their own lives. The communicative skills also become more and more necessary for being able to handle the new global learning society (Barnett, 2000).

The emergence of a new concept of knowledge in higher education

There are indications of the beginning of a new phase in higher education. We are moving from viewing knowledge in itself, as more specific and general, to emphasizing the knowledge as a by-product of education where focus is to develop competencies for work life (Barnett, 2000).The shift from knowledge as a process to knowledge as a product means that the universities are shifting from places where "Bildung" i.e. the humboldtian concept referring to the process of self-formation (Bowden and Marton, 1998), has been seen as the main object to knowledge viewed as more practical and applicable (Barnett, 1994). Traditionally, institutions of higher education have been accustomed to being assessed by the government as their main employer. Recent studies indicate the increasing importance of graduate employment in the private sector in most European countries. Now higher education is challenged by the debate about legitimacy and the desirable limits of influence of private employers on higher education (Barnett, 1994 1997). This can have implications for how and for whom the production of knowledge will be carried out. Both Gibbons (2002) and Barnett (1994 p. 93) are talking about a paradigm shift. We have moved from this linear thinking;

Higher education → Knowledge → Society

to a situation of

Society → Knowledge → Higher Education

The latter way of thinking could be seen as a reverse structure. Historically the universities were more independent but lately the states and e.g. the European Union have increased their influence over the production of knowledge. What does this mean? Education can now be considered to be economically driven in an international – and even global – context. Perhaps some features of the brand the old university stood for are jeopardised, for instance independent knowledge formation and critical thinking; these are

rather replaced by different kinds of professional competencies such as generic skills (Barnett, 1994).

The terminology of re-production can be discussed both from an epistemological point of view as well as from the development of different competencies. When it comes to the epistemological and ontological issues, there has been a demarcation between different faculties such as engineering and philosophy. The question is if the different ideologies now have to come closer to each other, when the surrounding society demands that our production should aim at producing individuals with specific competencies. Barnett claims that:

> the language of higher education is taking on a language of society. Empowerment, consumer, efficiency, audit and competence (Barnett, 1994 p. 159).

To widen the reasoning, Barnett has given the concept of competence two meanings. Firstly, the academic competence, meaning that the knowledge lies within the boarders of the discipline. Secondly, the operational competence, that is aiming at the societal needs, a kind of re-production with economic performance as a main objective (Barnett, 1994). The two forms of competence are in rival. Some comparisons can illustrate that, regarding the epistemology the operational compentence focus on *know how* while the academic competence has its focus on *know that.* Another example is to compare them from the viewpoint of learning; the operational competence is of an experiential characterwhile the academic competence is of a propositional. A final comparison regards communication, the operational competence is strategic whereas the academical competence is disciplinary (Barnett,m 1994). A way of envisaging the future is Gibbons' (2002) configuration of mode 1 and mode 2. They operate in parallel. Mode 1 denotes what researchers feel familiar with; research that is disciplinary, hierarchical, hegemonic and dependent on the researcher's autonomy. Mode 2 on the other hand could almost be seen as the opposite of mode 1. Trans-disciplinarity, heterogeneity, a flatter hierarchy characterize it and it should be reflexive and application-oriented (Novotny, Scott and Gibbons 2001 and Gibbons 2002). Therefore Gibbons' (2002) and Novotny's (2001) five characteristics of future research will be further elaborated.

The first characteristic is focusing on the application; *the knowledge/ knowledge production needs to be generated in the context of application.* This could be seen in contrast to be applied, meaning that the researcher first finds/creates theories and thereafter apply it to the "real" case. The second characteristic, presupposes that *the researcher uses a range of methodologies and theoretical perspectives to solve a problem*, this is named transdisciplinarily. The mode 2 knowledge formation in this trans-disciplinary form,

... is embodied in the expertise of individual researchers and research teams... it is encoded in conventional research products such as journal articles or even patents (Novotny 2001 p. 4).

Thirdly the authors describe a *growing heterogeneity in types of knowledge production* as a result of a better technology, both when it comes to the cable wiring and the interaction between computers etc. has resulted in more heterogeneous research teams. The fourth characteristic feature is that the *mode 2 knowledge is highly reflexive.* Previously there was an idea of neutrality and the researcher observed from a neutral position, a notion that has been replaced by an awareness of the necessity of multiple views, each of which departs from a certain perspective. Furthermore, the author's questioning the open and dialogical research that uses the conversation in the research.

It has become a dialogic process, an intense (and perhaps endless) "conversation" between researcher actors and research subjects – to such an extent that the basic vocabulary (who, whom, what, how) is in danger of losing its significance (Novotny 2001 p.4).

The fifth characteristic is the *emergence of new quality control*. Since the research is becoming more and more trans-disciplinary it is difficult to use the peer review system, because of the "dissolving" of the disciplines. The research teams are growing in size and are more heterogeneous regarding the background of the actors. Finally, there is no longer a clear and unchallenged way of deciding what quality is. We must learn to live with multiple definitions of quality. This must have implications for how the researcher can disseminate the results. Gibbons asks for a change, to go from a merely reliable production of knowledge to a more socially robust knowledge. Another challenge is to go from publishing in the "research society" towards "*a socially distributed knowledge production system*" (Gibbons, 2002).

According to Bowden and Marton (1998) the universities have three main functions i.e. teaching, conducting research and providing community service, what we in Sweden call the third task. This means that the researcher has an obligation to co-operate with the surrounding society; in research, development, targeted education, and to disseminate the research results.

Knowing this, what kind of influence/insight should society have on the research at the universities? Since the society, private investors and the industry are great funders of research, it can be discussed if the research still is as "free" as it was before. And if the research is "ordered" what happens with the autonomy and the objectiveness of the research? One way to deal with these problems is to embrace mode 2 more fully (Gibbons, 2002).

A Theoretical Frame of Reference

Communities of practice

In this thesis the concept of trajectory is significant, the students are moving from several situated practises within higher education to new pratice(s) located in work life. These practises have different boundaries, histories and traditions. Experiencing anxiety of not fitting in, not knowing what to expect are typical experiences of being a new member in a community of practice. The term for this role is the newcomer; who has to render meaning in negotiation with the community sustaining people, artefacts and commitments that are specific for the community in practice. Newcomers become participant of a community of practice through the process of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger 1991), in which a sense of belonging is developed through the relationships between the newcomers and the old-timers. Meaning is rendered in the light of practice and meaning is negotiated and situated in the specific context. Wenger express this as a,

> human engagement in the world is first and foremost a process of negotiating meaning … from this perspective, meaning is always the product of its negotiation, by which I mean it exists neither in us, nor in the world , but in the dynamic relation of living in the world. (Wenger 1998 p. 53).

Studies as a community of practice

Meaning is negotiated in a specific community; a community is defined as a "*way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognisable as competence*" (Wenger, 1998 p. 4). Accordingly, the pedagogical setting is a community of practice with its own rules and communication patterns. Svensson describes this in the following sentences;

> The characteristics of work practices in general, can in most aspect be applied to the specific practices of educational institutions. The point is however: not to argue that education and schooling is a work-practice like any other, but rather to argue that education can be studied using similar approaches as when studying other pratices. In fact, there are a number of highly relevant aspects that makes formal education unique in comparison to other forms of labour. (Svensson 2002 p.7)

The educational setting could be viewed as a community of practice and to some extent be reduced to an educational setting involving only the institutions, the power relations between teachers an student, the hidden curricula etc. Another line of reasoning is that there is a community that invovles all students enrolled in higher education. There are some basic features of higher education that all students have to adapt to. This community of practice can of course vary between universities, departments and disciplines. When the students enter this practice they soon encounter other different communities, and depending on their past history, experiences and expectations they will be participants in more than one community. This means that the students belong to different communities depending on their choices about where to participate i.e. the trajectory is formed by their individual participation in different communities of practice. A trajectory can be described as a movement that does not have a fixed course or destination; it has coherence over time that links the history, the present, and the future (Lave and Wenger, 1991). As the title implies, this thesis is studying political science students' experiences of higher education and work life and also the transition from the former into the latter. Lave argues that,

> … learning can be seen as a part in the subjects altered participation when moving through many different contexts in their daily lives. (Lave, in Nielsen and Kvale, 1999 p. 52 My translation).

The entry into the educational practice can be experienced as difficult because the individuals do not know what kind of social and discursive practices that the specific community (of higher education) has established. Communities of practice can be understood as social and material contexts; e.g. at home, at work, at the gym. This implies that we all have multiple memberships; most of us are engaged in several communities that may or may not have some common features e.g. the way to talk, the way to achieve a goal, just to mention some possible features. Belonging to communities of practice is an integral part of our lives (Wenger, 1998). These communities can be described as a nexus of multi-membership in which our identities are formed. Such a nexus is not a coherent unit, nor is it simply fragmented. Wenger claims that the identities are at the same time one and multiple i.e. learning is in this perspective embedded in the situated practice where the individual is participating (Lave and Wenger 1991). It is by participating in a community of practice that the feeling of belonging occurs. Fuller, Hodkinson, H, Hodkinson, P and Unwin, (2005) summarise that the fact of belonging rests upon the case that the member is allowed participation and in the end therefore facilitates learning.

Identity formation and trajectories

Trajectories are seen as motions over time, not necessarily following a pre-destinated course, but open to interaction with and influence of a multitude of sources. In developing a practice: the members of the practice are required to engage and communicate with eachother but also to recognize each others as members of the community. As a consequence, practice entails the negotiation of ways of being a person in that context. ... *inviteably, our practices deal with the profound issue of how to be a human being* (Lave and Wenger, 1991 p. 149). According to Wenger (1998) the temporal notion of trajectory in relation to identity formation suggests that it is an ongoing process, it includes the individual and the collective, becomes the experience of the present made up together with the history and the future, is negotiated with the paradigmatic trajectories and finally the trajectory is invested in the history of practice and in politics.

Identity and trajectory are interconnected, identity is perceived as temporal, and as trajectories the past and the future are in a process of negotiating the identity of the present. Being on a trajectory as a student includes both the past (it is in the walls, paradigmatic trajectories exist along with ideas of academic freedom, student vs teacher role etc), and the future (where did other students end up, what kind of job can I expect etc). The studies also provide the students with skills and certificates that enable them to entrance new communities of practices.

From studies to work life: A student trajectory through and out of higher education

The next section is a framework or a contextualisation of the research reported in this thesis, starting in the students' encounter with university studies, thereafter some space is devoted to reasoning about the transition that the students can experience when they leave the university and enter work life.

Meeting the University: A community of higher learning

It is during the initial encounter that the classroom order (ways of communication) is established. The teacher cannot hide behind routines; instead they must be established (Beynon, 1985). In this mission the teacher stands alone, as Ball (1980) argues,

> ... despite the traditional and institutional authority of the teacher as the major significant other in the classroom and the provision of institutional rules of behaviour, the interaction detail of classroom conduct is broadly left to the individual teacher to establish (Ball, 1980 p.152-153)

Furthermore the teacher also has to meet more specific and administrative demands such as announcing and implementing rules. The teacher also has to make the demands on the students explicit, and to establish a social order (Beynon, 1985).

One important aspect of the first meeting with the university is how this experience can help universities to maintain the students' in higher education. Moxley, Najor- Durak and Dumbrigue (2001) argue that a range of supportive practices and strategies is required if we want to keep students' in higher education. By support they mean that the students' needs to receive the recourses necessary in order for them to master their roles as students' and ultimately to become successful in their studies. An important issue is the emotional aspect emphasizing a warm and supportive environment that welcomes the students. The junior student could experience anxiety being in a new situation and this is something the universities need to consider. Another important factor that the university staffs need to be aware of is that a lot of students do not realise the extent of the demands on students in higher education. Students' also have to receive the information required in order to fulfill their needs on the campus. For example the teacher could inform the students about what he/she will be expecting of them.

Furthermore, Moxley (2001) argues that, the university should inform teachers and students about the institutional support available for the students to assist them in their learning efforts. The teacher could help the students' to discover ways of studying which are suitable for the student by employing a variety of teaching methods. Another task set out for the university is to inform the students about the possibilities of participating in the students' social activities at the university, thereby visualising any obstacles that could prevent successful studying (Moxley, 2001).

One way to help students' to meet the demands of higher education is to have freshmen seminars. The aim of the seminars is to support the development of students' ability of critical thinking and writing. Another aim is to provide the students' with experiences of the university, which in turn would supply them with the necessary tools to become successful in their studies. The results indicate that the seminar was successful in increasing the students' study efficiency. In other words, the seminars made the entrance into higher education easier (Howard and Jones, 2000). Another critical aspect of learning is mentioned by Barrowman, who claims that when the teacher manages to see him/herself as a tutor to the students', instead of a teacher of a subject, they will redefine themselves as being professionals and teachers.

The teaching then changes from merely being a delivery of facts to making the students participate (Barrowman, 1996).

Turning to the national arena, in a recent report by the National agency for higher education in Sweden 70 % of the students asked claimed to never or very seldom discuss the demands of their courses with the teachers. The authors explain this by the possibility that the students accept the demands of the courses without ever questioning them. Another interpretation is that the students' do not feel invited to question the demands or the idea to do so has simply never occurred to them. Alternatively the students' and the teachers do not regard these kinds of discussions as being relevant to the learning process. The students' experience that the teachers very seldom support them in their social development or give any support in handling non-study related commitments. (Högskoleverket, 2002).

The transition: Moving from the communities of higher education into communities of work life

The research interest in the transition from higher education to employment increased in Europe in the 1970's. This was at the same time as this transition process became more complicated. Awareness grew that the intermediary institutions to a large extent followed their own logic and dynamics. Thus, the employers' expectations and recruitment criteria became an important area for research. To a certain extent this provided useful information when setting priorities in higher education. Nevertheless, these efforts never became a regular feedback for adjustments between higher education and work life. Reasons like uncertainties about the criteria for the recruitment and the lack of routines, imperfections in identifying applicants' competencies, tactical games between higher education and employers, and fluctuations in the labour market itself, indicate the impediments in elaborating a well functioning feed back system (Students as "Journeymens" between Communities of Higher Education and Work, 2000). Apart from the question of how knowledge, especially professional knowledge, is actually being produced in our changing societies, it is rather a question of what knowledge is in the foreground. Another important question is what kind of professional knowledge should be encouraged from a societal perspective.

As Slaughter and Leslie (1997) noticed, professions are not fixed and static. Instead they are always in a process of being socially construed. Thus, a critical approach raises questions like, how does professional knowledge that is socially construed become a basis for behavioral tendencies i.e. gives status, prestige, power, high positions, more salaries etc? What seems to be at stake in the recent debate concerning the relationship between university and society is a philosophical understanding of episteme (scientific knowledge); the question

whether science in its traditional and strict sense - the quest for truth and pursuit of knowledge for the sake of its own- should be abandoned for the sake of the immediate necessities of social and economic welfare.

When discussing the term transition, the relationship between students and their coming profession is one of the focuses in this thesis. Of course this can be discussed both from the individual perspective as well as from a societal perspective. The individual is moving from one state of mind to another after 3-5 years i.e from a student to a professional novice. Today, when society is changing ever faster, the demands on the individual increases. The employers' job descriptions remind of the search for a super-human. How can the individual meet these demands? Barnett argues that we have to accept the challenges. The universities have a task to engage 50 % of a cohort in different educational programs. At the same time the universities are not prepared to let go of some of the old ideals. The surrounding world also gives constant signals to higher education that they must educate for work life (Barnett, 2000). Bowden and Marton (1998) argue that higher education cannot educate all the wanted competencies and skills for coming professionals. They also give the student an advice – focus on the critical aspects of professional situations.

If higher education is focusing too much on different competencies that the future employer needs, it is easy to forget that education can also for fill the individual's self- development. The world of super complexity demands that the employee is flexible when it comes to facing changing work tasks and workplaces. What competencies will then be needed in the future? Furthermore, the encounters with different people will play a significant role in the new global society. In this super complex "new" world - What will happen during the transition from academia to work-life? Will the students' be prepared to meet the super complex world?

Project Journeymen – Students as Journeymen Between Communities of Higher Education and Work

This dissertation is designed, planned and empirically conducted within a European Commission Project; *Students' as Journeymen between communities of Higher Education and work.* Four countries have participated, Norway, Poland, Germany and Sweden. Below a brief outline of the project is provided (the text is based on the application for the Journeymen project, SERD-2000-00174).

Higher Education and Work Life. A background to the main research questions in the journeymen project

The lack of stable forecasts about the nature of future tasks in work life and qualifications required to meet them has lead to an increasing emphasis on knowledge and skills that will make students capable to develop beyond their formal training (Rolf, 1998). Barnett (1994 1997) describes how the changed preconditions have brought about a shift in perspectives on knowledge and competence. The traditional academic perspective that emphasises the students' mastering of a discipline has in some countries, Barnett claims, been replaced by an operational/instrumental perspective that forces society to provide sufficient professionals for the economy. In Germany this development has mainly taken place outside the universities, like in institutions for higher vocational training.

In the project we concentrated on conducting research on the university cultures and work cultures and how they were mediated by cultural traditions, and ultimately even constructed in the minds of the students. How do students' and novices in the work place construe their university studies and their professions – and the relationships between them? The project also addressed the problems of suitability of educational institutions to meet the demands of work life; however, it was done in a way that enabled the researchers to investigate the "human dimension" of the "human capital" – i.e. from the perspective of the learner. Transforming a caption that is often used in the area of cultural studies, we may say that at stake here was not only what education makes of people, but also what people make of education.

The research perspective rest on the assumption that there is a mutual interplay between individuals and the collectives that shapes, reproduces, or reshapes the discourse of the different communities. To accomplish such a description, three empirical questions had to be answered within the Journyemen project (Application part B in Project Journeymen, 2000)

- What discourses can be discerned in education and work life as significant for the students' and the novices in their constructions of studies and work life?

- What structural/material/cultural conditions contribute to these discourses?

- What strategies do students' and novices apply in order to cope with knowledge formation – learning – in studies and work?

My role in the project and my contributions to articles I-IV

In September year 2001, all the project members, gathered physically for the first time. The meeting was held in Gdansk in Poland and the aim of the meeting was to establish some common ground to stand on for the next three years. More specifically we worked with two interview guides and tried to design them according to the general framework proposed (before I started to work with the project) in the application accepted by the European Commission. When I joined the project group many decisions regarding the design were already taken. My strongest memory from this meeting was some reflections on methodological issues that I brought up on the second day. I was convinced that mixing a sociocultural, phenomenographic and discourse analysis perspective would be hard for me to handle later on in my thesis. Some years later I find myself trying to do just that. A decision that I took myself was, however, to focus on one group of students. Therefore political scientist became the group focused in my thesis. I will not share all my notes from three years of collaboration here. The three months I spent in Gdansk, Poland during the last phase of my work has indeed contributed a lot to my own growth and also to my writing (most of the writing of article IV took place there).

Study I was designed, conducted and written equally by myself and my colleague Andreas Fejes, with qualified help from professor Madeleine Abrandt Dahlgren. Study II was designed and conducted (all project members collected data, though I did most of the interviewing) within the project. I did most of the writing, professor Lars Owe Dahlgren contributed with criticism and some writing. In study III my participation comprised collection,

analysis of the empirical data and contribution to the writing of the texts pertaining to the description of the political science students. In study IV, me and my Polish collegue Lucyna Kopciwicz contributed equally with the exception that I did the writing. Professor Lars Owe Dahlgren contributed with constructive critism and some language checking.

In the next section the aims and research questions of this thesis and a contextualisation of Politcal science studies is introduced.

The Aim, Research Questions and Contexts of the Studies

The overall aim of this thesis is to describe political science students' experiences of studies and work life. By investigating students' reflections on their study situation as well as their envisaged and actual work life through a cross-sectional and longitudinal design their journey through university to work life can be illuminated. From this aim six research questions were formulated,

- How do students in the beginning and at the end of their studies perceive their study program?

- How is the communication patterns between teacher and student negotiated?

- What discourses of knowledge and competence are operating in the programme?

- What discourses of knowledge and competence are operating in work life?

- How do students of Political science experience the transition from higher edcation to work life at two European universities?

- How do students of Political science and students of two professional programmes experience the transition from higher education to work life?

Contextualisation of the studies in articles I-IV

The students' in Political science enrol in a program/liberal arts studies in a classical discipline. What does this mean to the students? What is to be learnt? How is the program designed and what impact does it have on the students? In this thesis one group of students are in focus even though one article involves students from Psychology and Mechanical engineering.

Conditions for studies in Political Science in Europe

In Europe today, the educational system is undergoing what can be called a paradigm shift, there has been a large number of, EC- European Comission/EU European Union, funded project for instance: Comett, Erasmus, Lingua, Tempus, Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates (Bache, 2006). Outside the EU incentives a large number of countries choosed to sign the Bologna declaration that later on was reaffirmed and expanded in the Prague communiqué. The declaration was more than an agreement on common intentions, like reforming and harmonising higher education within Europe. Moreover fascilitating for the students' to study and search for work abroad, were in centives for the commitment. The programme involved some common goals that the participating countries should strive for before year 2010. Another significant project is the EPiSTEME (later renamed to EPSNet). The projects task is to suggest a common core curriculum in European Studies *"the main aim of the programme is to enhance quality and to define and develop a European dimension within a given academic discipline or study area"* (Bache, 2006 p. 240). Furlong states that,

> The Bologna Declaration is one way in wich the EU has sought to contribute to the development of specific reforms to help achive the 'Europe of knowledge'. At the highest level of EU descision – making. These initiatives are backed up by descisions of the European Councils in Lisbon in 2000, and in Barcelona in 2002 (Furlong, 2005 p. 56)

The Europeanization is a term that implies a political and economic rationale. According to Bache this phenomenon should be understood in the light that the rationale promotes '*ever closer union'* (Bache, 2006 p. 232). The author argues that there is a risk that the discussion of the implications, of the Bologna Declaration and other parties that promote the harmonization, may be overridden by economic and policial rationales. This could in turn have an impact that undermines the potential pedagogical renewal and its benefits of co-operation (Bache, 2006). There is also a debate on the risk for a marketization, today higher education is being 'transformed from an institution *in* society to becoming an institution *of* society' (Barnett, 1994 p. 157 in Bache, 2006). Beukel argues that;

> Europeanization of education, causes concern in most countries in Europe, one reason being that it is equated with homogenization of the educational systems that could imply a loss of national identity'. Yet there is a strong marketization logic for enhanced European co-operation in this sector: International competition between higher education institutions is intensifying and Europe- wide recognition makes sense for universities seeking to attract students and staff from an international marketplace...global economic

competition between states provides a strong logic for European co-operation in areas of research and skills development, which necessarily involves higher education (Beukel In Bache, 2006 p. 239).

General descriptions of Political science studies at the universities of Linköping and Gdansk

Linköping University

Political Science is one of the oldest disciplines in Sweden (the first chair was established in Uppsala in 1622) and is considered to be one of the most prestigeous of the social sciences. Since the labour market for political scientists is diverse; the program is general and mainly theoretoical. The content is focusing on different levels of the political sphere, i.e. the state, the region and municipality levels. From 2003 the students entering the programme can choose between two fields of specialisation, Political Scince or Economics. The courses mostly comprise lessons and seminars become more and more frequent. The students do also have a choice between three or four years of study, leading up to a bachelor's or master's exam. Both these exams comprise a written thesis. The students do also have a choice as to whether they want to have some practical experience. (For a more elaborated description see appendix 1 and article IV).

Gdansk University

Political science studies are typical liberal arts studies. The aim of the studies is to provide the students with practical skills for work in national administration bodies, self government, council organisations, political parties, economic and social oganisations, education and international institutions.

After the period of state socialism, it was rather hard to articulate left wing ideological positions and the conservative or liberal ideologies seemed to dominate. The programme last for five years and is divided into three blocks of courses; general knowledge, basic knowledge and specialist subjects. The courses are made up by lectures, lessons and seminars. Only the best students can expect help and a recommendation from their professors when searching for practical training. (For a more elaborated description see appendix 2 and article IV).

Methodology

Since three of my four studies have been conducted within the Journeymen project (see above), the methodology in this thesis rests on the methods used in the project. This means that parts of the empirical material has been analysed in the project group collectively, while the specific analysis of the Political science students has been made by me and the co-authors of the specific article (s). The observational study was conducted outside the project. I have used three different methods which refer to different levels and parts of the data. Figure 1 describes the relation between the different data gathered in the project and for my thesis.

The design of the empirical studies in the thesis

Study I	Study II	Study III	Study IV
Learning to play the seminar game	The two faces of political science studies	From senior student to professional novice	Learning for an unknown context
Observational data (year 2002)	Data gathered in project Journeymen (year 2002)	Data gathered in project Journeymen (year 2002)	Data gathered in project Journeymen (year 2003)
		Longitudinal data →→→	
Obervational data on students in their first five weeks at the university focusing on the negotiation of meaning.	Interviews with junior students' after five weeks in study. And interviews with senior students in their last semester.	Interviews with senior students' in the end of their studies approximately five-sex weeks left of their studies. And professional novices after appr. one year in work life.	Interviews with senior students' in the end of their studies approximately five-sex weeks left of their studies. And professional novices after appr. one year in work life. In Sweden and Poland.

Figure 1: The logistics of data collection for the empirical studies I-IV

Samples, data collection and the analytical procedures

Study I

The group of students followed in the first study was students attending either a program or an independent course in Political science. There were 131 registered students, 69 males and 62 females in the class, the age span was 19–42 years and ninety-one of the students' were 25 years of age or younger. The students' had different backgrounds, some had studied at the university before, some came directly from upper secondary school and some had studied in municipal adult education.

Our main data sources consist of observational material combined with semi-structured interviews. We applied a relatively unstructured ethnographic approach to our task (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

First, we collected data by attending a roll call and an informational lecture. Then we attended three lectures where we focused on the interaction between teacher and student. We also had informal conversations with a few students during the coffee breaks and after the lectures. After having attended the lectures, we followed one seminar group (out of eight) consisting of 15 students, 8 were males and 7 females. The group was followed during three seminars over a period of three weeks. Semi-structured interviews with 7 students in this group (six of them in pairs, and one alone), and with the teacher were conducted. The questions asked were derived from what we observed during the lectures and seminars. During our observations at the lectures and the seminars, we took field notes and notes were taken also during the interviews and informal conversations. The observational data was gathered during the autumn of 2002.

Study II

In this study fifteen students were interviewed (see interviewguide in appendix 3a and 3b) during the second half of their first year in the study programme (and who preferably had not studied at any other programme before). They are referred to as junior students. The age of these informants varies between 20 and 27 years of age. We also interviewed 10 students who were in their last term. They are defined as senior students. The sample of 15 junior students and 10 senior students was a stratified sample selected from the population of students registered in the program. The age of the informants varies between 24 and 37 years of age. The sample is approximately representative with regard to sex. The interviews were taped and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The duration of each interview varied between 45 and 90 minutes. The interview data from both junior and senior students were gathered during the spring of 2002.

Study III

In this study twelve students' from each programme were interviewed (see interviewguide in appendix 3b and 3c) on two occasions, the first time during their last year of studies (early 2002), as senior students' and the second time after approximately 15-18 months of professional work (mid-2003). The sample is an approximately representative proportion in terms of gender according to the composition of the population in each program. The interviews were taped and subsequently transcriped verbatim. The age of the informants from the Political Science programme varies between 24 and 37 years of age. The majority of students/novices were in the age span of 24 to 26. The age of the informants from the Psychology programme varies between 24 and 46 years; more than half of them were between 24 and 26 years of age. The age of the informants from the Mechanical engineering programmes varied between 24 and 31 years with an average age of 27.

Study IV

In the fourth and last study, the empirical data comprised interviews conducted in Poland and Sweden. The interviews (see interviewguide in appendix 3b and 3c) were all conducted in the subjects' native language. In both countries, the interviews had a typical duration of 60-90 minutes. The Swedish sample comprises 2 men and 8 women. The mean age is 28 years. The Polish sample consists of 6 men and 5 women, and the mean age is 23 years. In both countries, all the subjects were interviewed for the first time when they were about to finish their studies and for a second time after approximately 15-18 months in work life (hence, totally 20 interviews in Sweden and 22 in Poland). The interviews were taped and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The duration of each interview varied between 45 and 90 minutes. The data regarding the senior students were gathered in the early of 2002, while the interviews with the professional novices were conducted in the mid of 2003.

The analytical procedure

Ethnography

As regards the interpretation of the observational data, a variety of problems usually occurs. Wolcott (1994) argues that the researcher needs to differentiate between analysis and interpretation i.e. between scrutinising and understanding the parts and the subsequent interpretation of the totality. The researchers have to find a balance between these and the so-called thick de-

scription. Another problem is the risk of the researchers' over-interpretation of the data (Wolcott, 1994).

We chose to focus on the empirical data when we started our analysis process. Firstly, we performed a qualitative analysis to see what kind of patterns that aroused and thereafter we tried to interpret what appeared in the material; thereafter we related the interpretation to theories, i.e. what is consistent and what is inconsistent. The data (observations, informal conversations and semi-structured interviews) were gathered in an attempt to address the students' negotiation of meaning in their first encounter with the university. From several perspectives and by using different methods we were able to validate our findings by triangulating data (McCall, 2000, Larsson, 1994).

So, how can the case presented in our study, be of any significance to other contexts? One way to address this question is to reason about validity and the generalisability of our study. The results produced in a case study might be possible to generalise to other cases in a similar context, i.e. with similar prerequisites and conditions and therefore in some meaning comparable (Larsson, 2001). Lincoln and Guba (1999) reason along similar lines when talking about the concept of transferability. Another line of argumentation is whether the reader can recognise a specific phenomenon that is transferable to a more general level. The idea behind this is that the reader can transfer one formation (illustration of a specific case) to other formations. Case studies could thus contribute to the identification of a pattern, which the reader can use to identify a specific phenomenon (Larsson, 2001).

The Phenomenographic approach

> The phenomenograpic approach pertains to studies of impact within a learning perspective, which focus on learning in terms of the conceived content of the education i.e. how the students' understand basic phenomena within the educational programs. The phenomenon of learning is viewed as qualitative changes in conceptions of the content. This approach differs from the evaluative in that the basic assumption is that meaningful learning has to be studied in terms of what the students actually learn from the educational programmes and not in quantitative terms of how much the students' learn (Students as Journeymen Between Communities of Higher Education and Work, 2005 p. 5)

Phenomenography is the empirical study of the qualitatively different ways in which various phenomena in, and aspects of, the world around us are experienced, conceptualised, understood, perceived, and apprehended (Marton, 1994). The point is to suggest that the limited number of ways in which a certain phenomenon appears to people can be found, for instance, regardless of whether they are embedded in immediate experience of the phenomenon

or in reflected thought about the same phenomenon. Marton, Dahlgren, Svensson and Säljö at the University of Gothenburg developed phenomenography in a series of studies of learning in higher education in the early 1970:es (Marton, Dahlgren, Svensson, and Säljö 1999). The analyses were initially performed in order to find a description of the processes and outcomes of meaningful learning from the perspective of the learner. As regards the processes of learning, these were later interpreted as indicating the existence of a surface and a deep–level approach connected, respectively, to an atomistic and a holistic approach. These approaches could be described as a referential dimension as regards the focus of attention and a structural dimension as regards the organisation of the learning material during the learning process. (Dahlgren, 1975, Säljö, 1975, Svensson, 1976, Marton et al., 1999) A basic assumption is that individuals vary with regard to how they understand different phenomena in the surrounding world, and that describing the variation as an outcome space is a valuable research enterprise (Marton, 1981). A key issue in phenomenography is the nature and ontological status of *conceptions*, which is the object of the research. Marton claims that*,*

> ...the basic unit of phenomenography is an experiential, non–dualistic, and internal person–world relationship, a stripped depiction of capability and constraint, non–psychological, collective but individually and culturally distributed a reflection of the collective anatomy of awareness, inherent in a particular perspective (Marton, 1995, p.171).

In phenomenographic studies the context of learning, the structural aspect of the experience could be described as the 'what'–aspect of learning. What is it that the learner discerns from the content to be learned, what is it that is conceived figural? This makes up the direct object of learning for the learner. In our studies, the direct object of learning is the content of Political science and the knowledge and competence needed to become a political scientist. When we as researchers identify what is discerned, we can also see more clearly how the internal horizon, i.e. how the relationships between the component parts discerned is structured and organized. When we see how the conception is structured, we simultaneously see more clearly the referential aspect of experience, i.e. the meaning that the learner ascribes to the aspects of the phenomenon discerned.

In the phenomenographic analysis we firstly sat down nationally in our project groups trying to find the categories that could be established based on the material. The categories represent, of course, a number of individuals but what we were interested in was the features that were characteristic of a group. We used the following procedure to find the phenomenographic outcome space.

Step one was to get acquainted with the material, then select the statements (useful parts) in a separate file. Step two can be called condensation, and here is the core of the statements searched for. In the analysis,

> his task (the researcher, my note) is to penetrate superficial differences in order to uncover more deeply embedded similarities and differences: this is achieved in the next step: the comparison. Different answers are compared with each other... (Fallsberg, 1991 p. 35).

Step three is the *comparison* between the statements, initially a number of grouping emerges, often quite few, in step four the researcher then tries to *articulate* the preliminary category. The fifth step can be called a *contrastive* phase. It tries to answer the question – are there distinctive differences between the groups of answers and do they correspond to the name given to the content of the conception? The analysis aims for the categories being exhausting and exclusive (Dahlgren and Fallsberg, 1991).

We used phenomenography to find features within these cores of the conceptions/experiences that were found. We worked our way through the material in pairs and later met to compare notes. In this way the analysis has been carried out by more than one person in a process that might be called negotiated consensus (Wahlström, Dahlgren, Tomson, Diwan and Beerman, 1997).

The approach of discourse analysis

The intermediating role, bridging individual conceptions from the phenomenographic analysis with attempts to gain an overall understanding of academic cultures, makes the discourse analysis a central aspect of the methodology of the thesis. Discourse analysis is a set of research procedures applied to interpret complex issues of language use in particular social situations. As Gee notes, it is informed by a view of language that exceeds the traditionally communicative understanding of its function (i.e. that of exchanging information). For Gee, the main functions of language are

> ...to scaffold the performance of social activities ... and to scaffold human affiliation within cultures and social groups and institutions (Gee 1999 p.1).

This is why the linguistically expressed conceptions of educational issues can be understood as related to subjective activities (actual and planned), social (including professional) identities, and cultural and institutional structures. This approach aims at analysing the cultures of institutions on the basis of individual narratives of people involved in their activities. Social organisations are in general,

produced, reproduced and transformed through the ongoing, interdependent and goal–oriented communication practices of its members (Mumby 1997 p.181).

These practices, in turn, have "*implications for how social goods are or ought to be distributed*", which means that they are *political* in the generic (e.g. Aristotelian) sense of the word (Gee 1999 p.2). As language is a complex and multidimensional universe, the research on language is equally complex. Procedures generally referred to as discourse analysis are diverse, and there are numerous debates and polemics-taking place within this area of studies (for a presentation of the diversity of approaches see Mumby and Robin, 1997).

Since we used a phenomenographic approach to interviewing, i.e. asking question focusing on what the students' experienced, perceived – the discourses we investigated were constructed from the perspective of the "life–worlds" of the subjects. From there, we proceeded towards institutional and – in general – cultural formations. We also asked questions that pertained to a discourse analysis tradition, for instance, what should one do to be looked upon as a good student? And the follow up question - how do you know that? (See questionnaires in appendix 3a- 3c)

According to Fairclough, the concept of discourse has two meanings. Discourse could either be defined as the use of language as social practice, which is both constituted and constituting, or as a way of talking, rendering meaning to experiences from a certain perspective (Fairclough 1992 1995). A discourse is also demarcated by the expressed or tacit rules of communication that exist in the specific discourse(s). These rules give the interpreter a certain degree of leeway in his/her interpretation of how the individual/group speak and act, how they delimit and define what the formation of a discourse constitutes. Furthermore, the discourse may also shape, reshape and renew a practice. In other words, a discourse is not static but, rather, dynamic (Sandström, 2001).

The discourse analysis emphasises two units: (i) there is a mutual relationship between the discursive practice and the social practice. The discursive practice reproduces and can change the social practice and vice versa; (ii) together, these practices constitute our surrounding world (Winther-Jörgensen, 2000). The social practice is the world we live in. In this world, qualitative turns appear and these turns can be found and traced in both the discursive practice and the social practice. One could, for example, imagine a discourse of effectiveness, and a discourse of globalisation, etc. Such discourses are regarded as Discourses (with a capital D). We choose to use discourse analysis with a lower case d, it was probably the only way to understand our previous results from the phenomenographic analysis. After finding the discourse(s), in

our terminology finding "the talk" about the phenomenon, we tried to see the interrelations between the different analytical methods.

When it comes to the articles we made at least one more analysis of the material (except the two initial ones). So using these two methods have been difficult, but my conviction is that they have a stimulating effect on each other. Since we ourselves are active in the world of higher education, and the study programme is a part of the university, it is difficult to approach the material without preconceptions that may interfere with the analysis. The aim is, nevertheless, to reveal the obvious and the conceptions underlying the obvious, i.e. to show how some discourses (which have been seen and found) operate in the collected data.

Some methodological reflections

In study I an ethnographic approach was applied. The aim of the first empirical data gathering was to get acquainted with a new context for me as a researcher. How were the study conditions for students enrolled in Political science studies? The aim was to discover the unknown and to observe and find the distinctive features of the teaching. Since three of my papers have a methodological focus on phenomenography and discourse analysis some more space is given to them.

In studies II-IV a three layer analysis has been applied, the first layer was inspired from the phenomenographic approach whereas the focus in the first analysis round was to emphasise on the individual conceptions of professional knowledge and skills, and thereafter to find the conceptions on an aggregated level. The next level of analysis was the discourse analysis, were we tried to reveal the construction of knowledge, what the power relations looked like in an institutional setting, and finally we turned to the social hermeneutics, where we used the researchers' inside knowledge and general understanding of the social contexts in the respective countries. The questions put in this context would be- why use all of these methods or why these? To grasp the students' experiences in their journey from junior student to novice professionals we assumed that we needed to collect and analyse the data on different levels, i.e. individual as well as group level.

On the first level phenomenograhic approach we searched for the lived experiences of being a student in different phases of the education as well as being a professional novice. The results originate from the individuals and were thereafter aggregated on a group level. We found different outcomes of their lived experiences with a focus on learning and we brought the conceptions and categories from the phenomenographic analysis into the next level of analysis. The second layer in the analysis was discourse analysis. It was

built on the results of the phenomenographic analysis. Here we tried to see what was talked about, how did it render meaning, how did the students perceive other students' notions of a certain phenomenon etc. In other words, what kind of discourses were operating in the different programmes and in their (the students') perceptions of their future work life.

After having done this we tried, and of course during the process of collecting and analysing the data, to validate them in the large project group by subjecting our results to further comparative analyses on the one hand intra–nationally to compare different programmes, and on the other hand internationally to compare the same programmes in different national contexts. These comparisons had to be based on the understanding of the meaning that particular phenomena and discursive practices had in the given culture(s), and therefore they have to refer to the insiders' knowledge of the cultures in which the researchers themselves live. In other words, we are convinced that it is not possible to make comparative analysis of qualitative data otherwise than by discussing their meaning in different cultural contexts. What is needed here is a kind of social hermeneutics, which, through iterative interpretations, creates a possibility for understanding how social realities are perceived and construed in different institutional and cultural contexts. The procedure was based on the assumption that social reality is multi-layered, and that this complexity cannot be grasped by a single methodological procedure. In other words, we have to acknowledge that phenomenography, discourse analysis and hermeneutics rely on different ontological assumptions. These, however, are not considered as conflicting here, but as mutually interrelated. It is not our aim here to discuss social ontology, but – briefly speaking – we may say that the world we have tried to investigate is composed of individually constructed knowledge (investigated by phenomenograhy) of phenomena that are socially construed in institutions, where organisational structures are maintained by power/knowledge relations (investigated by discourse analysis), whose meaning is embedded in broader cultural contexts (accessible by hermeneutic interpretation in which insiders' perspectives are a crucial pre-requisite of understanding). (Derived from discussions with project members in 2005).

Results

The empirical data gathered and analysed in this thesis consists of both cross sectional data as well as longitudinal data. This section comprise of four articles with the intention to illustrate Political science students' progress through the university into work life. Study one illustrates the students' first meeting with the university, focusing on the negotiation of meaning drawing from observational data. In study two data are gathered in the university context exploring the students' conceptions of education and future work life. Study three focuses on the transition from higher education to work life in a comparative perspective, compare the Political Science studies (liberal arts studies) with the programme of Psychology and Mechanical Engineering. Finally in study four we compare Swedish and Polish senior students and professional novices (longitudinal data) and their conceptions of their previous studies, their future profession and their experiences of the transition from higher education to work life.

Below summaries of each article will be presented. For more elaborate descriptions of data and analysis see study I-IV (as so numbered in this chapter).

STUDY I

Learning to play the seminar game: Some students' initial encounter with a basic working form in higher education

The aim of this study was to investigate the political science students' initial encounter with the seminar as a working form and the negotiation of meaning that took place in it, involving both the students' as well as the teacher. From the analysis three domains were derived concerning the initial negotiation of meaning during the seminar; the how, what and why questions. *How* does turn taking take in the communication appear? *What* constitutes the content of discussion? *Why* use the seminar as a teaching method; what is the function of the seminar? The concepts of initial encounters and communities of practice have been used as analytical tools to understand the phenomenon of negotiation. Below follows a brief description of study I.

Conflicting ideas of freedom and control

Here the *How* is in focus; how is the turn taking negotiated in the seminar. The teacher starts the first seminar by saying, *the seminar is not an examination; instead it's a free discussion. "All groups are different; sometimes I have to guide more than other times. I would like to talk as little as possible".* After this initial remark the students' starts a "free" discussion on the subject of happiness, after some time the teacher intervenes, he sums up the discussion and initiates new questions derived from what just has been said. Now something interesting occurs, the students' move from a period of time when turn taking was occurring without any physical signals to a period when the turn-taking is explicit and controlled by the teacher. Here the same pattern emerges again. It seems that the students strive to maintain the so-called free discussions while the teacher prefers a more goal-oriented discussion. A tension arises between these different interests, but this tension can also be viewed as an implicit negotiation as the patterns of communication are being shaped by a power play. This is also supported in the interviews.

The students express that the first seminar was more structured, while the teacher started the second seminar by saying, we fiddled around a bit (referring to the first seminar). These two different views represent two opposite starting points in the negotiation of the structures of the seminars and in the creation of meaning. Another way to interpret this is by looking at the negotiation of roles. When students' enter Higher education, there prior history confronts the history of others and through the negotiation of meaning they get/are given a role in this new community of practice.

Trying to live up to the official message: Should we discuss other things than what the teacher wants?

As the headline implies this section deals with the *What* question. Here, a pedagogical implication arises where the question is whether learning benefits most from the seminars taking the students' own questions or the teacher's questions as their the starting-point.

Anderson (1997) argues that a wide-ranging discussion can be favourable for some students' participating in small study groups, but create a sense of frustration among other students'. In our case, this tension seems to be present. However, we have to take into account the fact that the teacher has more than just the seminar to think of when he plans and leads the seminar. The function of the examination is to measure the extent to which the students have assimilated the material read and this is not necessarily accomplished during the discussions.

The seminar as a communicative practice

Now we turn to the *Why* question. The teacher begins the first seminar by establishing the fact that he will take notes during the seminars and that this

should not worry them. Furthermore, he says that the seminar is not an examination but a free discussion.

A female student now makes her first contribution in the seminar and the teacher loudly ticks off her name on the list (i.e. he "hits" the attendance list with his pencil). This is a recurring event and it is obvious that the seminar has the function of an examination, partly because attendance is mandatory and partly because active participation is demanded. If the students' fail to be active, they are given a home assignment, which means that a student has to contribute within the time limit of the seminar. An interpretation of the situations when the students' names are being ticked off and the teacher is carefully checking that the seminar questions are being covered might imply that this seminar has a control function. The seminar itself is not negotiated in an open manner, the teacher presents the curriculum and the students' should adapt to it. The students express an anxiety for this tick off and they also think about when to make the contribution so it will fit in.

STUDY II

The two faces of political science studies; junior and senior students' thoughts about their education and their future profession
Submitted to Higher Education and revised

The aim of this study was to investigate and describe the differences in which junior and senior students' in Political Science experience their programme (studies) and how they envisaged their future in work life.

Junior students – Studies as a Bildung project
The motives for enrolling into this programme seem to be of a more personal character since the students' talk about their studies as a personal educational project i.e. as a *bildung* project. By receiving a broad education, the core of the education is experienced as something good in itself. The discourse of *bildung* can also be characterised as the discourse of the classical student. The studies in this program are organised in a traditional manner, first the students have to learn about political theories. Thereafter there are seminars to discuss the knowledge that have been mediated by teachers to the students' in lectures. The first two years are mainly designed like this. During this time of their studies (1-3 years) learning equals memorising.

Senior students – Studies preparing for the role of an investigator
The impression conveyed by the senior students regarding their study programme is active involvement. Almost all of the students express the experi-

ence that the teachers want them to participate in the discussions, and to be able to defend their conclusions when arguing with others. This kind of knowledge and skills are emphasised more and more throughout the programme. The teacher promotes the idea that students have to be active and contribute to lectures and seminars (mostly in the seminars). And there are probably two reasons for this; one is to support learning and the other is to prepare for a future profession.

Students on their future role in work life

Junior students – Political scientists as watchdogs for democracy

The junior students in political science say that there are several aspects to be considered when it comes to specifying the role of a political scientist. One is to explain to others (a pedagogical vein) how the political system works, another is to develop and improve the political institutions as civil servants. Furthermore, they refer to power relations, to exercise control within a political system through being a *watchdog for democracy*, i.e. having an insight into historical developments in societies to avoid e.g. what happened in Germany before World War II and to prevent it from happening again. The students are well aware of the professional territory and its distinctive features - it is defined as being related to the political life and the administrative bodies in a society regardless of whether they are local, regional, national or international. The field/ territory that these students' may enter is so diverse that the students' do not envisage a typical job.

Senior students - Political scientists at your service

The strongest discourse is the one that prepares the students to become a civil servant. There is a distinction in the nature of the relationship between the political sphere and the public in general. Firstly, it is claimed that an important task is to investigate how society could be developed and to make visionary prognoses. Secondly, the aim is to provide the public and the political establishment with information. The role of political scientists is, rather, that of providing a basis for political decisions. He or she may face tasks that also force them to be a significant other in a decision-making process.

STUDY III

From senior student to professional novice: Learning trajectories in Political science, Psychology and Mechanical engineering

The aim of the study was to investigate and describe the students, enrolled in Political Science, Psychology, and Mechanical Engineering, identity and knowledge formation, identify features of discourses in the programmes and work life and finally to relate the results to the design of the respectively programme. Interviewing students' at the end of their studies and then follow those into work life could be one way to get access and thereby explore the trajectories.

Political Science

Areas of employment
Eight of the novices are found in a variety of different work contexts within the public sector. Municipal administration, social welfare administration and the national migration authority are examples of such areas of operation. Two novices are working in private companies, one of the informants is still studying and one is unemployed.

Trajectory in terms of identity formation
The political science programme could be claimed to prepare not for a specific professional activity, but for an academic way of being, developing a *homo academicus* as the outcome of the educational programme. The trajectory into work life for some of the political scientists could be described as being positioned as responsible interpreters of legislative texts. This responsibility is also linked to certain moral dilemmas, one student express it like this; *"the higher up in the hierarchy you are or on different levels I think there are even more of these moral dilemmas. How much should ignorant politicians decide and how much should knowledgeable civil servants decide. So I guess that's a moral dilemma in political science".*

This is a typical trait of the political scientists in local, regional and state authorities. The situated identity as a mediator could also be interpreted as positioning political scientists so that they are squeezed between conflicting interests in the community of work life. Few of the novices see themselves as being in a position of power in relations to the political decision-making arena. This could reflect either an unawareness of the political dimension of the role of the political scientist or indicate differences in exercising power in

different organisations. As a result of work experience a new role and situated identity of the political scientist as a negotiator and a mediator crystallises as the awareness of the responsibility involved in being the advocate of the individual citizen increases.

The trajectory in terms of knowledge formation

The transition can be described as a *process of detailing* in a transformation from generic academic skills, i.e. the capacity to read and write academic texts, to skills in analysing and describing problems in combination with substantive skills, emphasising being knowledgeable about political systems and the institutions of democracy. This particular combination of skills leads to the experience of a vague exit from the programme; there are signs of fragments of an identity as an *independent investigator* or *civil servant* developing at the end of the programme. Analytical and communicative skills are the most frequently mentioned abilities. A thorough understanding of the structure and functions of the Swedish society is, furthermore, mentioned as a significant element of professional competence. A critical attitude is mentioned as desirable, not least when assessing data gathered for investigative or evaluative purposes. It is important to be able *to work independently and search for information*, as one of the novices expresses it.

Psychologists

Areas of employment

All novice psychologists work as clinical consultant. Fields of operation are hospitals, particularly the psychiatric area involving children, teenagers, adults and schools.

Trajectory in terms of identity formation

The psychology programme could be claimed to prepare for the requirements of clinical work. During the trajectory of the programme, the psychology students' compose a kind of *professional fellow-being* character comprising elements both from their private personality as well as their professional role. The concept comprises the meaning of the helper and the social engineer being capable of moderating people's behaviour. Periods of clinical internship have made it necessary to separate the private and the professional sphere. The typical characteristic of the discourses in work life concerning the professional role of a psychologist is the *ability to reflect*, both on the individual and the collective level. On the individual level, reflection constitutes both a way of synthesising and understanding the client's problems but also a way of scrutinising their own thoughts and feelings.

Reflection also stands out as a hallmark of a good psychologist at the collective level. Some statements in the interviews indicate that the ability to contribute valuable reflections to a discussion between the team or between colleagues give a feeling of being professional.

The trajectory in terms of knowledge formation
Two ways of relating to the theoretical body of knowledge are discernible from the primary phenomenographic analysis. The *eclectic mode* means that fragments of knowledge from different theoretical schools are moulded ad hoc to be applied in a specific case. The *pluralistic mode* consists of a repertoire of perspectives from which the professional selects a specific theoretical perspective for a specific case. The trajectory from the educational programme to work life is characterised by *continuity and confirmation* of the knowledge base acquired during the educational process.

The feeling of being put to test rather than socialised into the professional work, leads to a legitimate participation in the professional community shortly after entering work life, indicating a close power/knowledge relationship.

Mechanical Engineers

Employment areas
Ten of the novice engineers are working in medium-sized and large private enterprises. Two of them are enrolled in trainee programs. The novice engineers describe their work with the words calculating and constructing. Examples of areas of application are developing products and/or computer programmes, certifying and evaluating processes and products. One informant is a doctoral student, and one is a worker in a factory.

Trajectory in terms of identity formation
The discourses operating in the educational programme of what constitutes a mechanical engineer is typically that of being representatives of an *intellectual elite*, mastering complex theoretical problems with the task of *building society*. As novices, the typical interpretations of the discourses operating in work life concerning what constitutes a mechanical engineer have been replaced by that of an employable trainee with *generic problem-solving capabilities.* The ability to be flexible is considered important and in a way creates a dilemma in the novices' choices between specialisation, which would mean the acquisition of expertise within a certain area, but at the same time be to the detriment of generic flexibility.

The uniqueness of the discourses operating in work life about the professional role is that of being an exclusive thinker. The informants claim that there is a typical "engineering-thinking" that seeks the optimal and most

pragmatic solution to any problem. However, the characteristics of the work task for most of the novices are typically that the novices get well-defined and limited tasks as parts of bigger projects, which they do not have a full understanding of or responsibility for. Only gradually they get working tasks of a more complex nature.

The trajectory in terms of knowledge formation

The trajectory from education to work life appears to the mechanical engineers as a *discontinuity in scope and responsibility* of the professional role. This could bee interpreted to mean that passing the programme leads to a formal legitimacy that in itself is a merit and, thereby, leads to a peripheral legitimate participation in the professional community of engineering. It also indicates that parts of the trajectory, in terms of knowledge formation are ritual. The ritual feature of the programme is strongest at the beginning, where students are put to the hardest test by taking the massive initial courses.

STUDY IV

Learning for an unknown context; a comparative case study, Swedish and Polish political science students' experiences of the transition from university to work life

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The aim of this study was to investigate senior Political Science students' conceptions of their studies, their future profession and their experiences of the transition from academia to work life, with a major emphasis on their learning experiences. As a tool to explore the transition between academia and work life we used interviews. The interviews are conducted with Swedish and Polish students. We interviewed the students in end of their studies and then again after approximately 15-18 months in work life (longitudinal data).

The journey

The journey from higher education to work life is perceived quite differently in the two countries. In Poland, the students had difficulties in anticipating what the transition from higher education to work life could mean to them. The Swedish students', instead, describe this transition in terms of a life-long learning project. In Poland, the students express a fear of facing a possible unemployment; they express what Barnett (2004) calls uncertainty, to live in a rapid world were you as a person feel insecure to live in a post-modern society. One has to bear in mind that in the last few decades, Poland has dismantled its social welfare, which means that they cannot count on the kind

of security that the Swedish students can expect. In Sweden, the students' have another social welfare situation and instead, they wonder more about what their future work will be like. There is a discontinuity in both countries when it comes to learning at work, meaning that at university you learn *about politics* and when entering work life you learn and sometimes work with something completely different.

The discourse of adulthood

This discourse has different values in Sweden and Poland. The Polish senior students' and professional novices' notion of this concept is about growing up, maturing and taking responsibility, whereas in Sweden only one professional novice expresses the Polish view of maturity. Some Swedish students' talks about the transition from a life perspective, meaning, for instance, that different experiences in the past have shaped them, and that present and future activities in their work life will continue to shape them in their professional lives. In the Polish material, a more pragmatic view of the transition is expressed, it is all about learning to take responsibility and mature as a human being.

The social discourse in an educational framework

In our study, the social discourse equals a description of the students' way of experiencing their social life within the educational framework. The students' values having peers, and being members of fraternities and taking part in social events. The social activities where either perceived as having a value in themselves or as something complementary to the studies. The students' focus on social life can be interpreted from several different viewpoints. One starting point is the phenomenon of the hidden curriculum. In Poland, the education in Political Science has a weakness in the institutional environment, which means that the students are only willing to contribute a minimum of effort, but hope for the maximum output. This phenomenon can be explained partly by the fact that the institutional environment can be described as being dominated by priority given to students' social life, which means less emphasis on parttaking in teaching events and less time spent on independent studies. Partly, the environment is also dominated by an ambition to be a member of an elite academic profession.

Both the teachers and the students create this special atmosphere jointly. Furthermore, the students' conceptions of learning the effortless strategies of coping with institutional demands (photocopying materials without reading them, sharing notes, cheating during exams) are well known to all the actors involved. The primacy of common sense knowledge is also a characteristic feature of this logic. As a result, the teachers and the students had come to a hidden agreement on what level of effort they would put into their studies and, furthermore, what scientific level should be aimed for. Such discussions

are often encouraged by the department/teachers but seem to remain on a commonsense level, they have all negotiated together a legitimate community. The social practice perpetuates this context (Wenger, 1998).

Another effect of this logic, minimum effort – maximum output, is the impact on their *habitus*. The elitist studies make the students' develop a self-confidence that by far exceeds their knowledge and competence. Even though this discourse is labeled the social discourse, studying is an individual project.

The critical moment of transition

This discourse describes the encounter with a new practice/context, the workplace. The Polish students' described the anxiety many of them felt facing the entry into a very diverse labour market, but also the worries about becoming unemployed (at the time for the interviews, it was 17 percent). In their education, an idealistic notion is produced and reproduced, the notion that you can get a job in the European Union or elsewhere because you have passed through an elite education. The socialization of the students means that they have a lot of confidence that is not always in consonance with their actual professional competence. The Swedish students' characterized their study time in a very positive way, and they encourage people to go study at the university. They also emphasize that the learning not only consists of the theoretical knowledge but also the learning in meeting new people.

Discussion and concluding remarks

The design of the four studies highlights and gives an insight into political science students' experiences of their education in different stages.

In the first study I described how students entered their *trajectory of learning by a first encounter with Political science.* After a roll call and some initial lectures, a seminar serie started, the most striking result found was the phenomenon we call the tick-off. The students started to discuss and after a while the teacher hit his participant list rather hard and thereby indicated to the students that it is mandatory to give an insightful comment in the seminar.

When interviewing the teacher he gives two explanations to why the seminar has different functions, it is as an examination and at the same time an activity for enhancing learning. The teacher viewed the seminar as both a learning opportunity and as an assessment. In other words there is a potential conflict within the teacher; on the one hand, he had to pay attention to the students' learning and on the other hand he has to comply with the university assessment system. One way of understanding this conflict can be to scrutinize it from the perspective of community of practice. In line with this - a person who is a member of different communities of practice has several roles to master, *"she must find an identity that can reconcile the demands of these forms of accountability into a way of being in the world"* (Wenger, 1998 p.160).

The teacher's explicit talk and the body language gave the students contradictory signals. They are more receptive to the body language than to the spoken language and several students said in the interviews that they wait and try to fit their contribution into the seminar to be ticked off. Their behaviour coinsides with what Miller and Parlett (1974) call cue seeking. The students seek cues from the teacher's behaviour and talk in order to prepare themselves for the examination. In the social practice of teaching in Political science the teacher is an old-timer, being a role model for how to act, communicate and behave within the specific community of practice that just this study environment constitutes.

In the second study the *trajectory of learning was further described in a cross - sectional study with students in the beginning and at their end of their studies.* After about six weeks in their studies, students were asked how they perceived their studies and what their expectations were for their future life as professionals. The students' witness that the strongest incentive for enrolling in the Political science studies was the *Bildung* incentive, i.e. the studies in Po-

litical science is something good in itself. At the end of the program the students have broken the code, and one discourse appears to be stronger then the others and that is the learning to master an investigator's role. In the beginning of the studies the students dreamt about being a hotshot in the media or to end up in the hall of power (Brussels). These dreams have, however, been replaced by a more realistic notion of a future employment, the one of becoming an investigator. This label refers to mastering a set of generic academic skills; the political scientist should be good at digging out information, observing, investigating, analysing, and synthesizing societal phenomena. Most of these descriptors are also required in any academic profession. In this sense the students in Political sciences do not differ essentially from other student groups e.g. those that ere enroled in professional programs.

If we look at the curriculum the studies are built upon the notion that knowledge has to be acquired in a specific order. First you have to build a base (usually a theoretical one) thereafter you are prepared to put the knowledge in action. There are still a lot of educational practices that embrace this design. A contrast is problem-based learning (PBL) that emphasises the students' own ability and responsibility to learn. The studies are designed to put both theoretical and practical knowledge in the foreground (Poikela and Poikela, 2005).

When it comes to the comprehensive and difficult task of answering the question about the impact of higher education, we found that the studies could have both a ritual and a rational character possibly to a large extent depending on how the program is designed and thereby what the students brought with them into work life. Furthermore, a rational relationship between education and work life may be substantive or generic. Substantive knowledge is content - specific and contextually situated, while generic skills are transferable between different contexts. The rational path has its strength in the logic relationship between academia and work life, the transition between the two cultures becomes less problematic if the education is preparing the students for their future profession. This is of course easier if the studies are within a programme and the target is a well-defined profession. It is also reasonable to assume that studies and programmes have a ritual character where the connection to a specific context where you can apply your knowledge is lacking or unclear. For students in Political science the relationship between higher education and work life stands out as rational, emphasising generic skills. An interpretation is that the generic knowledge needs to be transformed and contextualised in order to be applicable in the individual case/work place. The students stated that the generic skills and the learning they achieved during their studies were perfectly suited to their present work tasks, despite the fact that they worked in very different settings.

In the third study the part of the *tracjetory from higher education to work life is subject to further scrutiny in a longitudinal study.* The experienced students are now moving out of the community of studies in higher education to meet the demands and expectations from the work life. In the interviews a flavour of uncertaintly is present or as Barnett puts it.

> ... this learning for uncertainty is ... a matter of learning to live with uncertainty. It is a form of learning that sets out not to dissolve anxiety – for it recognizes that this is not feasible – but that sets out to provide the human wherewithal to live with anxiety (Barnett, 2004 p.252).

The transition does not always include these strong elements. Comparing students from Political science with students from the programmes of Psychology and Mechanical engineering illustrates the variety of experiences of the transition from studies to work life. The tracjetory of identity formation among Political scince students is developing the academic way of being. In work life the novices express that they are squeezed between different interests; i.e. the politicians and the public. This identity is interpreted as having the role as a mediator. Few of the novices see themselves in a position of power. When asking the novices what kind of knowledge they acquired throung studies and what kind of knowledge that is required in their present work they generally point out generic skills, these skills are important to master since most students end up as civil servants or investigators. This indicates that there needs to be a transformation between studies and work, meaning that the knowledge needs to be recontextualised to the specific tasks that the novices will encounter.

The students in Psychology describe their identity as a mixture of the professional and private spheres. Furthermore the concept of a professional fellow being comprises two different views of the psychologist; a helper and a social engineer that is capable of modifying a clients' behaviour. The novices emphasise that the most important skills for a psychologist is the ability to reflect both on an individual and a collective level. The transition is characterised as comprising both continuity and confirmation. The studies prepare the students well for their future work tasks.

The discourses found in the mechanical engineering programme are those of belonging to an intellectual elite, and, moreover, that the students should be able to solve complex problems, since their task is to build the society. The novices should master generic problem-solving capabilities, a typical mechanical engineer are also flexible and interchangeable. The identity is portrayed as the one of an exclusive thinker, i.e "engineering –thinking". This includes the ability to seek the most optimal and pragmatic solution to any problem. The students' transition can be described as a discontinuity in scope and responsibility of the professional role.

This indicates that the trajectory in terms of knowledge formation is of a ritual character.The ritual features of the programme is strongest in the beginning of the studies, when the students are put to the hardest test by taking the massive initial courses. The intensity decreases throughout the latter parts of the programme and the ritual character becomes less obvious.

One of the main results in this thesis is the great impact of generic skills or compentences; from a students' perspective this could be at the expence of learning the content of the discipline i.e. the object of learning. According to Bowden and Marton (1998) there are several questions pertaining to the issue of what is learnt and what should be learnt. Their point of departure is that learning is a change in our way of seeing and experiencing something. They argue that university studies are not only studies per se, the studies should also provide the students with skills that prepare them to cope with a developing society.

> ... having learnt to see something in a certain way implies becoming able to discern aspects of a certain kind of a situation and being able to focus on them simultainously. Such a capability originates from having experienced vaiation in dimensions corresponding to those critical aspects (Bowden and Marton, 1998 p. 108).

They call for more integrated curricula that go *beyond the specific content* consisting of integration, holistic goals, making the whole greater than the sum of the parts, and also to support the development of students' capabilities to deal with subject-specific contents of professional situations. This indicates that curricula need to be changed not only regarding the core issues in the present curriculum but also regarding the teaching. This will empower the students to search for learning opportunites that enable them to embrace the variation of specific situations that can be applied to several professional situations. This movement from the old curriculum to a new one does also makes the shift more transparent, the shift implies a reorientation from teaching to learning.

> In addition to a shift towards focusing on learning and on the learners, we believe that the nature of the curriculum per se needs attention. Typically, traditional curriculum design has focused around the needs of the discipline. The syllabus, that simpe statement of what the educational programme is about, is normally constructed around the structure of the discipline (Bowden and Marton, 1998 p. 115).

What does employability mean when studies have a broad entrance and a vague exit? Above a journey or a trajectory of learning has been described. Below an attempt to sum up and reflect from a societal perspective will be presented. When the studies in this thesis were carried out the Bologna proc-

ess was yet to bee implemented. In Sweden today universities and their staff are all busy writing new curricula and new guidelines for examinations and quality control. One of the central goals for the Bologna process is to make the higher education systems in Europe more homogeneous in order to promote student and staff mobility.

A major aim of the Bologna process is that students who leave each of the three cycles of education – bachelor, master and doctor – should be employable. To become employable the students are required to master not only a set of academic generic skills but also to be able to contextualise these (Dahlgren et al, 2007). So, where did the Political science students in Gdansk and Linköping end up? Were they employable? This is the central question in the fourth, comparative study. When asked about their journey the Swedish students expressed satisfaction and a feeling of good hope for the future. This feeling of being privileged and having entered a personal Bildung project is the foremost impression that the students convey throughout their education. This experience is typical for the Swedish students, whereas the Polish students expressed anxiety about the future. - Where will I end up? - Are there any jobs for me? - How will I cope financially? From Barnets reasoning this could imply that the Swedish students have learnt to handle this anxiety whereas the Polish students are left to their own destiny. An additional reason could be that the Polish society today is made up by elite and driven by capitalistic ideologies.

> It is also nowadays difficult to motivate young Polish academics to engage in the political sphere. The great majority of young educated individuals do not seek employment in the public sector. The money and the "action" are elsewhere: in the fast growing private service sector (Szablowski, 1993 p. 354-355).

As regards the Gdansk students, there is a strong contradiction between the idealized view of the profession mentioned by many senior students and the real labour market situation. Indeed, it seems as if knowledge and competence acquisition at university were irrelevant to the subsequent professional working life. The job novices particularly appreciate the value of social and communicative competence and positive self–portrayal and assimilation in social contexts. Furthermore, organisational skills, flexibility and loyalty are regarded as essential for work in companies. Specialised knowledge, on the contrary, seems to be subordinate to the above mentioned skills. This appreciation of practical key qualifications is particularly surprising since the Gdansk curriculum generally marginalises practical application. It is tempting to regard this distinctive feature as a paradox: the Gdansk students try to understand and discuss current politics without any real participation.

The Linköping graduates end up in work life with a higher level of consonance with what they have actually studied, now regarding the focus of learning generic skills. They work as investigators and in some cases as mediators, writing legislations and proposals to the politicians. In the data from Linköping as well as in Gdansk, the key to learning the subject is to master the generic skills; e.g. to be able to communicate, write and analyse. The Linköping students witness that they are foremost political scientists at home when following the news and keeping an eye on issues of democracy. Their current work tasks do not reqire this kind of knowledge.

The educational design of Political science in Sweden is of a rather traditional character. The students taking part in the studies reported in this thesis start their studies with a negotiation about the meaning of their studies. In some cases they receive double messages about what they are expected to do, when they are expected to talk, and how the examination is arranged and conducted. Another group of students that were interviewed in their first semester witness that the strongest incentive for starting the education is a Bildung incentive. This implies a broad entrance. They also gave us an insight into what they perceive as the most significant tasks for a political scientists, that they should keep an eye on issues of democracy, but also that they have a responsibility as a civil servant, to function like a mediator between the politicians and the common people. Since the studies give you general academical skills, you may end up in a variety of work places with different work tasks and this gives meaning to the last part of the title, a vague exit.

The dominating contemporary trend is to adjust professional programs to fit specific labour market needs to an even greater extent. If we want to counter-balance this idea of tailor-made academic professionals with persons possessing a broad perspective of significant contemporary issues we should definitely defend the right of universities to educate a sufficiently large number of students in accordance with the classical ideals of liberal arts studies; broad overview, critical attitude and argumentative skills.

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Acknowledgments

> You can choose direction and speed in life, but never your destination.
> (My translation -unknown author)

So, how did I end up here, almost six years after starting my doctoral studies? My own journey has been filled with joy, frustration and now, finally, satisfaction. But enough about me, there are many people around me who have contributed or supported me in one sense or another.

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Appendix 1

Political science studies at Linköping University

This material is foremost based on an interview with the director of studies at the programme of Political Science. A secretary at the department has kindly provided the statistics.

POLITICAL SCIENCE	LINKÖPING UNIVERSITY
Pedagogy and learning organisation	Lectures, conventional but with a mixture of different forms... we don't have anything like PBL etc. the education builds much on lectures but seminars are a reoccurring teaching form. The forms for exams are both written (in a building with students from various programmes are watched over so they don't cheat) and in essays when you are writing at home. The seminar culture grows with every year and tutoring is very frequent in the last terms (when writing the thesis). I don't know if the students arrange learning situations by themselves. Accessibility: generally I think the accessibility is pretty good. At least four different subjects are integrated in the programme. The environment in LIU is good when it comes to this.
Specialisations within discipline and their status	Programme: political scientist or economist (study together), the main subject decides... within these main subjects there are several choices, one is international politics or another Swedish and local politics. In economics I don't really know but they have two main tracks.

Structure of the curriculum	The students read several subjects at the same time, this seems to increase, a positive thing with this is that the students are hungry and take initiative but there are problems involved as well: an effect is that the students don't finish in time. It's also so that the courses we give are full time studies; our planning is adjusted to this. And this means that the students shall be put in that amount of effort (at least 40 hours a week). Two of seven terms are free; they can chose from the curricula within the university or travel abroad to study. It is possible for the students to build their own competence by different choices throughout the programme; it is embedded in the programme. The programme is 160 p (mag.exam).
Practical training	Right now we have started a new course in term 7 that is voluntary. The students can choose to have some practical training in 20 weeks or 10 weeks. It's not mandatory, the students organise this and the department approves.
Number of students	Since the programme only has admission in springtime, one cohort represents the students in each year. N - 172 students (registered 2004) Year 1: 49 students Year 2 (term three is missing), term 4: 52 students Year 3: 43 students Year 4: 30 students
Gender structure	Year 1: Male 22, female, 22 Year 2: Male 24, female, 22 Year 3: Male 19, female, 11 Year 4: Male 5, female, 10

The significance of the MA project and the role of the master's thesis in the process of learning	It has a great deal of importance. We train for having an independent and critical ability when watching the society, a central aspect to learn is to see and ask problem, to make them researchable with right methods. To see and perceive political problems is of great importance. This is the core of Political science, the aim to develop ability to perform a societal analysis.
Hierarchies of possible tracks of professional career (a "ladder of desire")	I don't think it is like this. One or two students can have entered the programme with a certain desire. The general picture is that we have a couple of organisations that have interest for political scientists in the labour market. A lot of students are interested in international politics. But a lot of them are quite realistic about their coming work. Many students want to (and do) end up in the Swedish public sector, governmental departments etc. but we also have a big group that doesn't know what they want, many of them view the education as useful and "bildung" inspired.

Appendix 2

Political science studies at Gdansk University

Information sources are the curriculum of year 2001/2002, (the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Gdansk), information from the study counsellor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, information from the interviews with freshmen and senior students, general knowledge about the academic system and work conditions in Poland.

POLITICAL SCIENCE	UNIVERSITY OF GDANSK
Pedagogy and learning organisation	The programme is divided into three blocks of courses: general knowledge, basic subjects and specialist subjects. Courses take different forms: lectures, lessons and seminars. Visits to the Sejm (Polish Parliament) and meetings with politicians are organised in order to show students the practical aspects of political work. The majority of students in the fourth and fifth years of studies have already worked - mainly in the media or local councils. They usually spend four days in the workplace and one day a week at the university. This is possible because there is a small amount of lectures during the last two years of studies.
Specialisations within discipline and their status	Political and self-government systems The development of civilisation International political relations (Lack of data concerning status of each specialization)
Structure of the curriculum	The studies last five years. The content is fixed: It is not possible to choose an individual education scheme except for specialization paths in the curriculum. Besides the obligatory courses there is an only one elective course (30 hours) within the block of general knowledge.

Practical training	Only students who attend a pedagogical course have to complete a practical training period. There is no requirement to complete a training period during the studies for other students but most of them strive for attending to such practical activity. Only the best students can expect help and recommendation of their professors in searching for practical training.
Number of students	Juniors 2002 (1st year): 74 students Seniors 2002 (5th year): 156 students
Gender structure	1st year: F: 49%, M: 51% 5th year: F: 44%, M: 56%
The significance of the MA project and the role of the master's thesis in the process of learning	MA seminar (4sh year: 60 hours, 5th year: 60 hours). To get a master's degree students have to prepare a dissertation and pass an exam. The respondents haven't mentioned writing the master thesis as an important experience in the process of learning.
Hierarchies of possible tracks of professional career (a "ladder of desire")	There is no professional role model. There are no firm career plans, no definite career paths. In spite of the relatively low professional satisfaction, there is neither concept nor vision of a definite career path.

Appendix 3a

Interview guide for WP 1

Opening questions

1. Why do you study psychology/political science?
2. Do you think this is a common motivation among your peer students?
3. Did you have any clear ideas about what psychology/political science is before you started studying?
4. Were did you get these ideas from (personal or other sources)?

Learning

5. In what situations do you learn? (We may ask this general question first. It the respondent does not specifically relate the answer to learning of psychology /political science etc, we should follow up the question by asking more specifically:
6. Tell me about what you do to learn psychology/political science (Describe situations which are typical.)
7. Do you find any of these situations/activities particular suitable/comfortable for you? Why?
8. Have your learning skills changed now, compared to when you started your studies?
9. *How do you prepare for examination?*
10. What are good marks given for?
11. Which opportunities does the institution provide for you to learn psychology/political science?
12. How were you informed about these opportunities?
13. What do you think about what is offered to you in this respect?
14. Is this/ Are these (a) common opinion (s) among your peer students?
15. Which of these opportunities do you engage in yourself – and why?
16. If you would like to change anything in the programme, how would you go about it?

(The question is linked to participation)

17. *How do you think such an initiative would be received?*

Knowledge

18. What sort of knowledge do you consider it important for psychologist/political scientist to have? Why?
    How do you know that?

19. How does this correspond to the knowledge that you have been introduced to so far in this programme?
20. Based on the way you see the programme so far, do you think it is most focused on teaching psychology as an academic discipline or qualifying for work as a psychologist?- Why do you think so?

Competence

21. What is a good psychologist/political scientist good at?
22. How do you think this programme will help you become good psychologist/political scientist?

Participation

23. How do you experience the social environment among psychology/political scientist students?
24. What do you find it *most* important to engage in? Why? Are these common choices among your fellow students?
25. What do you find it *least* important to engage in? Why? Are these common choices among your fellow students?
26. Whom do you find it most important to *associate* with in this programme (characteristics)? Why?
27. Whom do you want to *distance* yourself from? Why?
28. In which ways do you profit from the experience of your fellow students?
29. How much time do you usually use on your studies in a typical week?
30. Do you have a job? Why? – Is it related to your field of study? How much time do you use on work?

Expectation/Motivation

31. What does it mean to *you* to be a good student in psychology/political science?
32. What should one do to be considered as a good student (behaviour and attitudes)? How do you know that?

(If they use the perspective of the institution, remember also to ask them to see it from the perspective of the fellow students (student culture), and vice versa).

33. What motivates you to continue studying psychology/political science?
34. Are there any significant persons or events so far in the study that have been important for your motivation to study psychology/political science (positive or negative)?
35. What do you expect to do/work with as a psychologist/political scientist?
36. What importance do marks have in this programme?
37. How do you think the marks you get at examinations will influence your job/career potential?
38. How do you feel about that?
39. How does this influence the way you study?

Personal and moral dilemmas

40. Do you believe that being a psychologist/political scientist implies a kind of societal and moral responsibilities/ obligations? – If so, what sort of responsibilities/obligations do you think of?

41. How do you prepare yourself for meeting such responsibilities/obligations?

42. Do you see any moral dilemmas or challenges in your coming role as a psychologist/political scientist? Which?

43. How do you prepare yourself for dealing with these challenges / dilemmas?

44. Is this a part of the role as a professional psychologist/political scientist that you are worried about?

45. Can you imagine situations where there may be a potential conflict between your personal moral and your role as a psychologist/political scientist?

Concluding questions:

46. Why do we have psychologists/political scientist?

47. If I was a young student, who wanted to study psychology/political science at the University, which three advises would you give me in order to help me to become a well integrated student in the programme?

48. Based on what we have been talking about, is there anything you would like to add or comment on?

Appendix 3b

Interview guide for WP 2 .1

1. What has it been like to be a student?
   a) Follow up with psychology/political scientist/...
   b) Why have you studied psychology/political science/...?
2. What stands out as most important during your studies?
3. Which persons have influenced you mostly (during your studies)?

Now I want to ask you about your notion about learning/knowledge/studies.

4. What was your idea about what Psychology/Political science/... deals with before you started studying? Where did that idea come from?
5. Can you describe how you felt on the first day at the university?
6. Has your life at large been affected by your university studies?
   - How?
   - Describe!
7. What has kept you going on with your studies?
8. What should one do, to be looked upon as a good student?
   - How do you know that?
9. Are you better at anything now regarding your studies compared to when you started?
10. What situations in your studies have been most rewarding from a learning point of view?
    - Why?
11. In what way do you benefit from your peers' experiences?
12. How has the program/institution supported your learning efforts?
13. When (in the programme) did you first experience yourself more as a psychologist/political scientist/... than as a student?
    - What happened?
    - Where?
14. Can you recall a situation where you felt as a good student?
    - Develop, describe what happened?
15. If you think back on your studies, what would you have changed?
    - What would you like to keep?
    - Why?
16. Have you tried to change anything in the programme during your studies? How did you do it? If no, why not?

And now I would like to ask you some questions about finishing studies and starting to work.

17. What sort of knowledge do you consider it important for a Psychologist/ Political scientist/... to have? Why? How do you know that?

18. How does this correspond to the knowledge that you have been introduced to in this programme?

19. How do you feel now as you approach the end of your studies? (retrospective)

20. How do you think about starting to work? (prospective)

21. How has this programme helped you to become a Psychologist/Political Scientist/........?

22. What do you think a good Psychologist/ Political Scientist/... is good at?
    - What can one do to accomplish this?

23. Do you know what you are going to work with? (if no, proceed to next question)
    - With what? (Content in the working tasks) Where? (Context of the working place organisation, values, routines etc.)

24. What kind of work do you feel well prepared for?
    - How does this relate to your studies?

25. What kind of work do you feel less prepared for? How does this relate to your studies?

26. What do you want to work with in the future?
    - Why?
    - Have you considered working in another country?
    - Which?
    - Why?

27. What do you not want to work with in the future?
    - Why?

28. Have you done anything to get a job that you would like to have?
    - What have you done?

29. Have you had any job during your studies?
    - What kind of job was it?
      Has it had any significance?

I would also like to ask you some questions about your future professional role.

30. Why do we have psychologists/political scientists/...?

31. Do you see any moral dilemmas or challenges in your coming role as a psychologist/political scientist/.....?
    - Which?
    - Do you believe that being a Psychologist/Political scientist/... implies a certain kind of societal and moral responsibility?
- How have you prepared for meeting such responsibilities?

Finally some general questions.
32. What stands out as most important during your journey through the university?
33. If I was a young freshmen, which advice would you give me in order to help me to become a good student?
34. What stands out as most important during our interview?
35. How can we keep in touch with you?

Appendix 3c

Interview guide for WP 2.2

Reception in work life.
1. What is it like to work?
   - Challenges/surprises/benefits
2. Is it different to work compared to study?
3. What was it like to be a newcomer at this work place?
4. How do you think you were looked upon then?
5. How are you looked upon now? How would you explain this change – if any?

The work
6. What do you work with?
   - Content/tasks of work
   - Length of engagement so far
   - Permanent/temporary
   - Phases of unemployment – why?
7. If you think about your work and I mention the word responsibility, what do you think about then?
8. If you think about your work and I mention the word independence, what do you think about then?
9. If you think about your work and I mention the word co-operation, what do you think about then?
10. If you think about your work and I mention the word learning, what do you think about then?
11. What kind of competence do you need for your present work?
    - Why?
    - How do you know that?
    - Is that the general opinion here?
12. Tell me about something important/significant you have learnt in this period of work.
    - Why do you think that was important?
    - How did you learn that? (by yourself/with others, incidentally/intentionally)
    - Is this something you had expected to learn?
13. What did you learn in your studies that you appreciate most in your job?
    - Why?
14. When you meet a task in your work that you can not cope with, what do you do?
    - Describe (by your self/with others, incidentally/intentionally)
15. What should one do to be regarded as someone who does a good job?

- How do you know that?
- Is that the general opinion here?
16. What gives you energy in your work? What drains your energy?
17. Did work turn out to be as you expected?
    - Have you tried to change anything at your work place? Why/Why not?
    - How did you do it?
    - What happened?
18. Have you experienced any moral challenges in your present work?
    - How did you deal with them?
    - Do you feel prepared for dealing with such challenges?

The professional role/identity
19. If you think about being a X, what kind of knowledge is important to possess?
    - Why?
    - How do you know that?
20. What do you think a good X should be good at?
    - What can one do to accomplish that?
21. Can you remember a situation in your work place when you have felt like a good X?
    - What happened?
22. Do you feel like an X now?
    - Why/why not?
23. Why do we have X?
24a) Think about your professional role as X. When I say moral responsibility, what do you think about then?
24b) Think about your professional role as X. When I say societal responsibility, what do you think about then?
24c) – k) are optional questions
24c) Are these topics that you talk about with others? Explain what, where and with whom.
24d) Have you changed in your views with regard to these topics since you started working?
24e) To what extent do you feel that you are part of a collective of professionals?
24f) Do you belong to a professional organisation / network? Which? Why / why not? Contact with previous peer students?
24g) Do you subscribe to / read systematically any professional journal or read non-fiction literature to any extent?
24h) Are there any persons / professional groups or any 'traits' of you profession that you identify particularly with or distance yourself particularly from? Which? Why?
24i) As an X, are you in a position – or have knowledge – that gives you power? How do you feel about that?
24j) How do you see X's status in society? How do you feel about that?

24k) How are you different now from when you finished your studies
- as a professional X?
- as a person?

25. What do you work with in five years from now?
- Why?
- Have you considered working in another country?
- What country?
- Why?

The studies in retrospect.

26. Looking back on your studies, what do you think about them now? Do you think differently about them now compared to when you were a student? How? Why?
- Which persons meant the most to you during your studies?

27. How do you think your studies have helped you to become a good X?

28. With the experience you have now, is there anything you would like to change about your study programme?
- Add/subtract, change. - Why?

Concluding question

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