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# Internationalisation in Swedish School of Library and Information Science

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Internationalisation in our world is an increasingly important factor and becomes more and more applied to higher education institutions. The term “internationalisation” is used both to signify the concept and the process of integrating international/intercultural dimension in all areas (teaching, research, service functions) of the activity of universities and other higher education providers (Knight 1999). There are several generic approaches used in an institutional internationalisation strategy in higher education that Jane Knight describes in her works. These approaches do not need to exclude each other and may be supplementary.

Table 1: Approaches to internationalisation

Approach	Description
Activity	Curriculum development, student/faculty exchanges, technical assistance, international students
Competency	Development of new skills, knowledge, values, attitudes in students, faculty and staff. Interest in defining global/international competencies grows
Ethos	Creation of a culture or climate on campus, which promotes and supports international/intercultural initiatives
Process	Integration or infusion of an international/intercultural dimension into teaching, research, and service through a combination of a wide range of activities, policies and procedures

(Source: Knight 1999, p. 15)

Sweden is one of the countries where the business internationalisation process has been very intensive since the end of the World War II. In 1997 in Europe only the Swiss had more multinational enterprises per inhabitant than Sweden. Of course the export market is dominated by approximately 50 big corporations, however, all in all there were almost 45 000 companies that export products from Sweden (Export/Importåret 1997/98).

The expansion of Swedish companies beyond national borders required internationalisation of education as a way of ensuring the competitiveness of Swedish businesses abroad. As many smaller countries with a less-spoken language Sweden was looking for higher education and research partners in other countries for much longer than the immediate present. However, the economic and political rationales of recent decades have supplemented traditional educational and cultural motives of internationalisation of higher education, which were always strong in Sweden. They have grown in importance especially recently when the dominant political goal of Swedish governments has been promotion of West European integration and strengthening of the role of Sweden in the European Union (Högskoleverket 1997:8 S).

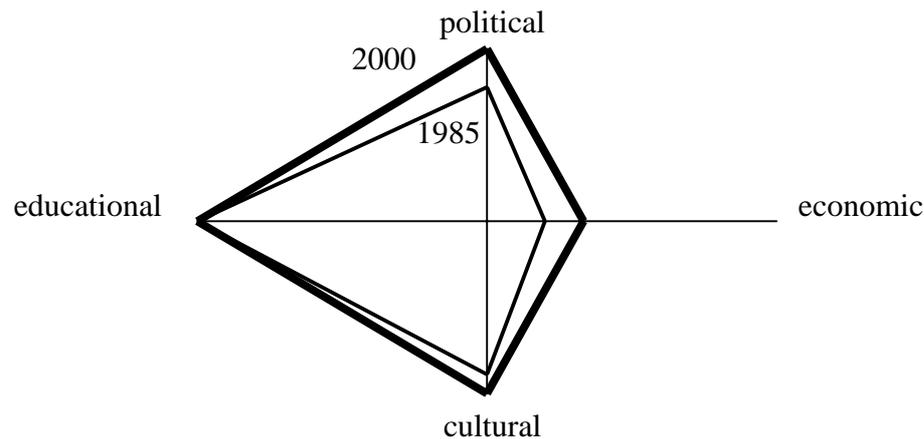


Figure 1: Rationales for the internationalisation policy of Swedish higher education (from Högskoleverket 1997:8 S, p. 178)

The internationalisation of business organisations has been a focus of researchers' attention in Sweden since 1960s. There is even a recognised school of thought in this area known as the "Uppsala school". The Uppsala school led by Sune Carlson has looked into the differences between international business operations and business in a single country beyond evident transfer and financial issues: institutional, cultural, market, information, communication, control, and other factors, which emerge with the internationalisation of organisations (Carlson, 1962).

Research into business internationalisation has used several approaches to the investigation of this phenomenon, produced a range of models of internationalisation process and distinguished certain internationalisation situations and strategies. The internationalisation in the business market environment would be different from internationalisation of a public organisation such as higher education institutions in Sweden. However, we may approach them as service providers entering a competitive European education market.

The internationalisation process in SSLIS is closely related to the general goals and objectives of Borås University College. In 2001, HB formulated a general internationalisation policy. It emphasises that HB, "strives:

- to prepare students, teachers, scientists and administrative personnel to function within a global perspective,
- to help the individuals to gain access to the world wide contact network,
- to exchange students and lecturers or researchers,
- to become internationally competitive in education,
- to become a recognised prestigious university in Sweden and abroad (Hanning 2001, p. 4)

Four areas of high priority are indicated in the document:

- exchange of students
- exchange of lecturers/scientists
- research organisation within the profile areas of the University of Borås
- liaison of development of education within the profile areas of the University of Borås (Hanning 2001, p.6).

Following the main policy of the institution, internationalisation cannot be separated from the main tasks that Swedish School of Library and Information Science has to perform as a major higher education institution for LIS in Sweden:

- To develop through research the academic subject Library and Information Science as a theoretical basis for the basic programme and for development within the area of library, documentation and information.
- By educating students in Library and Information Science meet the various demands of the labour market for competent co-workers such as librarians in different types of libraries and for information specialists within trade and industry as well as for the public sector.
- To offer students greater freedom of choice and the chance to specialise within the four major areas of Library and Information science as designated by SSLIS.

SSLIS has realised its relative geographic isolation from its inception, and has emphasised international contacts and co-operation. Today, it has a well-developed network of co-operation with Nordic and European countries and has bilateral agreements with a number of other countries world-wide. These contacts include student exchange (over 30 students have gone out and arrived to Borås since 1991), staff exchange, course development, common projects, conferences and international meetings. The established partners during the years were: École Nationale Supérieure des Sciences de l'Information et des Bibliothèques (Lyons, France), Loughborough University (UK), Fachhochschule für Bibliothekswesen (Stuttgart, Germany), Lisbon Autonomous University of Luis Camoes (Portugal), Nordic LIS schools (especially for doctoral studies), and newly established relationships with many other partners. The participation in international programmes and organisations of the staff members and the organisation itself started two decades ago. The internationalisation policy created by the University of Borås highlights the main tasks of the activity for the present:

- to co-ordinate and publicise the whole international activity better,
- to harmonise it with the institutional policy and intensify as well as expand it in main directions,
- to deepen the sense of international/intercultural environment that should influence and motivate primarily the students.

The goals of internationalisation activity at SSLIS are formulated as follows:

- raise quality of education
- raise standards of research
- become competitive on the European education and research market.

Main directions followed to reach these goals are:

- offer international environment for the students
- update teaching according to the international developments and needs of international students community; follow developments in the international higher education field
- follow developments in the activities and programmes of international bodies
- develop a research culture hospitable to international collaboration
- encourage participation in all kinds on international forums

Within these directions and according with the priority areas of HB SSLIS sees the following priority areas for itself:

- attract foreign students with a curriculum that meets the demands of European labour market and European standards;
- seek international recognition of SSLIS as a research institutions;
- strengthen international public profile of SSLIS study programmes and research.

The internationalisation of SSLIS involves the following means of implementation:

*in education:*

- development of English language programmes and courses;
- sorting out the level of the programmes offered for foreign students;
- participation and widening SLISS presence in European exchange programmes;
- incorporating courses with strong emphasis on Swedish cultural features for foreign students;
- promoting Swedish educational experience through international educational projects;
- organising probation and work experience for the teaching staff at the Universities of other countries;
- harness the experience of foreign educators visiting SLISS.

*in research:*

- encouraging of publishing by SLISS staff and doctoral students in international publications;
- submitting of international research projects to funding bodies of EU and other international agencies;
- enhancing of exchange of doctoral students with other universities;
- organising international research seminars, workshops, and conferences;
- taking part in international research seminars, workshops, and conferences.

*general:*

- publicising SLISS in international media;
- extending participation of SLISS outside Europe.

The analysis of the development of SSLISs' international contacts and activities as well as newly developing policies reveals that it uses all four approaches indicated by J. Knight (activity, competence, ethos and process).

Johanson and Mattsson (1988) identify four types of companies according to the degree of the internationalisation of the market and the company itself: the early starter, the lonely international, the late starter, and the international among others.

		Degree of internationalisation of the market	
		<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
Degree of internationalisation of an organisation	<i>Low</i>	The early starter	The late starter
	<i>High</i>	The lonely international	The international among others

According to the overview data it is possible to argue that SSLIS occupies the position of *The international among others* on the European LIS education market characterised by internationalisation of the LIS (profession and study area) and its integration with other information-related professions and study areas in the information society.

The initial overview of SSLIS's experience shows that international contacts are an experience of both 'single loop' and 'double loop' learning about conversions and exchanges in different socio-economic-cultural contexts. Single loop learning refers to the

intuitive response to emergent and unexpected opportunities, the ability to handle cultural diversity, the willingness to build and maintain relationships in a cross-border context and getting access to research information. The 'single loop' learning occurs in different ways, and shapes the images of an orientation to 'global' and international library and information studies and research. Double loop learning refers to an international learning process wherein existing theories-in-use of the international (global) views of the world, educational values and belief systems/patterns of action in international level are continually modified as a result of experience there<sup>1</sup>. In the case of SSLIS double loop learning can be found mainly in the development of research programmes and doctoral studies.

Internationalisation is a continuous process in organizations - there is no point at which the process is 'finished'. The contexts change, the demands of international partners change, the opportunities of international funding agencies change, and the market demand for internationally-oriented courses changes. The SSLIS has been engaged in the process for some years and today there is a quickening of the pace as a result of institutional policies. We can expect, therefore, that internationalisation will continue to be part of the School's strategy for the future.

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<sup>1</sup> "When the error detected and corrected permits the organization to carry on its present policies or achieve its presents objectives, then that error-and-correction process is *single-loop* learning. Single-loop learning is like a thermostat that learns when it is too hot or too cold and turns the heat on or off. The thermostat can perform this task because it can receive information (the temperature of the room) and take corrective action. *Double-loop* learning occurs when error is detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organization's underlying norms, policies and objectives." (Argyris and Schön 1978)