

Assessment, Accountability, and Educational Quality in the United States and Sweden

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Accreditation as quality

- Accreditation is primary means by which institutions assure quality to students and the public
- Accreditation signals that institution/program meets threshold standards

U. S. Issues

- Public concerns about quality of higher education
- Employers' perceptions that graduates aren't ready
- Concerns from federal government about quality and definition of time-based credit hour (federal funding based on this unit)

U.S. Accreditation

- No single authority oversees higher education.
- State governments oversee public institutions.
- Churches/other groups oversee privates.
- Multiple sources of funding:
 - State, student tuition, corporations, foundation, individuals, endowments, federal funds

Swedish Issues

- Public has confidence in the quality of higher education
- Employers do not argue that graduates aren't ready
- The governments' main foci are
 - To give institutions more and more autonomy
 - Apply New Public Management with “service providers” and “customers”
 - Efficiency in the higher education sector

Swedish Accreditation

- One single authority oversees higher education – Swedish Higher Education Authority
- Few sources of funding:
 - State funding for domestic (EU) students, no tuition fees (99%)
 - Full-cost tuition fees for non-EU students (1%)

Standards to meet – VT situation

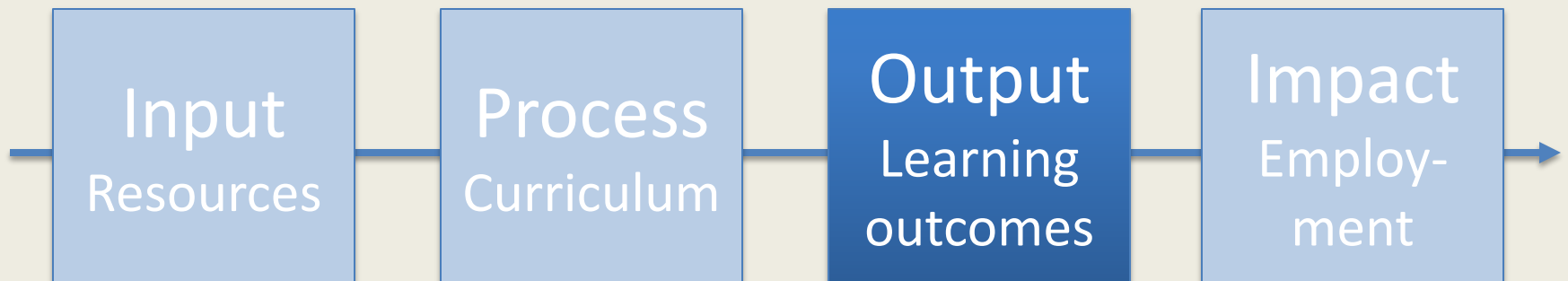
- Has a mission appropriate to higher education
- Has resources, programmes, and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain that mission
- Maintains clearly specified educational objectives that are consistent with its mission



Standards to meet – Lund situation

- Students should achieve the degree-specific learning outcomes laid down in the Higher Education Act.

“demonstrate both broad knowledge of his or her chosen field of technology, including knowledge of mathematics and the natural sciences, as well as a considerable degree of specialised knowledge in certain areas of the field”



Observations

- Increased emphasis on use of Learning Outcomes as a basis for accreditation
- Providing evidence of what students are learning will become increasingly important
- Slow adjustment of institutions to the new situation
- Content and credits is still the academic currency

Implications for international cooperation

- Potential: LO approach should move focus from institution to the student, open up for mobility.
- Challenge: To learn how to translate another institutions LO:s into the local context.
- Challenge: To provide evidence that allows “international experience” etc. to be translated into the local programme LO:s