Introduction

Developments and changes in higher education systems have been a focus of scientific investigation during recent years. Shifts in belief systems concerning higher education (Braun / Merrien 1999), the relation between the State and higher education (Henkel / Little 1999) just as changes in academic career patterns (Enders 2001) or policy networks and policy regimes (Kogan et al. 2000) have been discussed. The debate is mainly embedded in the context of social changes, labour market developments and the europeanisation of the education sector.

During the 1960’s and 1970’s European education systems underwent a period of enlargement and opening. This process was forced by Social Democratic governments as a measure to realise social justice and improve educational chances for the working class as well as people with a low social status. Various researchers have maintained that the basic conditions for Social Democratic parties have changed. “Social changes, like individualisation and the uncoupling of individuals from social determinants” caused a “freeing from ideologies” reduced the trust in party elites just as they increased voter-fluctuations.² (von Beyme 2000:208; compare also Borchert / Golsch et al. 1996:9ff.) Political parties reacted to these developments with a “transition to flexible policy-orientations” (von Beyme 2000:208). This is also true for Social Democratic parties. The “identity and sense of belonging” is no longer given by a certain context of living conditions, instead they must be constituted by “reverting to concrete material or even symbolic policy-offers” (Borchert / Golsch et al. 1996:10). In other words: “The tireless process of modernisation put parties under adaptation-pressure.” (von Beyme 2000:202)

It is the concern of this paper to evaluate if and how Social Democratic higher education policy changed from the mid-1960’s to 2000. Merkel did pronounce the ability of European Social Democracy to adapt to its “environment” and he described the history of Social Democracy as “a history of continuing revision of ‘ways’ and ‘goals’” (Merkel 1996:82). Taking this into consideration it is reasonable to expect that Social Democratic governments did change their focus and concepts in higher education policies from equality to moderate forms of elitist education. In the following I will show if this expectation is correct and – if it is – how Social Democratic actually changed its focus on equality in higher education policies.

In this paper I will look at higher education policies of the Social Democratic governments in Sweden³ and Germany⁴ in a comparative perspective. Since Germany is politically organised as a federal country and the Lands have the responsibilities in questions of education, I will pay attention to both the federal and the regional level – for the latter I decided to take a closer look at North-Rhine

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¹ An earlier version of the paper was presented at the ECPR 31st Joint Session of Workshops 28 March – 2 April 2003 in Edinburgh.
² All translations of German or Swedish quotations are done by the author.
³ Sweden had a Social Democratic government during the periods between 1932 and 1976, 1982 and 1991 just as from 1994 until today.
⁴ Germany had a Social Democratic government – in coalition with the Liberal party – on the federal level from 1969 until 1982. Social democracy returned into government – now in a coalition with the Green party – in 1998.
Westphalia². The policies will be compared with respect to three aspects: Firstly, the goals of Social Democratic higher education policies expressed in policy documents. Secondly, the instruments and measures chosen in order to realise these goals and thirdly, the outcome of these policies.

The 1960's and 1970's – Times of Rolling Reforms
Generally it can be said that the political debate of the 1960’s and 1970’s was dominated by the notion of equality between social classes. In Sweden the Social democratic party (SAP) and the Trade Union LO launched the term of “increased equality” (ökad jämlikhet) and Germany faced an intense debate about “equality of chances” (Chancengleichheit). When it comes to higher education policies this time was also a period characterised by reform ideas and big projects. In both countries Social Democratic governments agreed upon that differences in participation in higher education of different groups in society was explained rather by the social background, origin or regional preconditions than by the personal talents. That is why the main emphasis was put on reform concepts that would re-structure the higher education sector. The general concept for both countries was regionalisation (Regionalisierung, regionalisering) aiming at a blanket coverage of higher education institutions – a concept strongly related to structural-policy that was meant to balance living conditions between different areas.

Sweden
In 1968 SAP and LO set up an equality-committee to evaluate both the level of equality reached in the country just as problems associated with reaching equality. The final report – in some countries also known as the Alva-Myrdal-report – was presented one year later. The idea of equality given here is rather classic: “All people have a rightful claim to live a satisfying life capable of development.” (Menningen 1971:48) This right needs to be expressed in terms of real life-chances; purely formal rights are not enough. Equality is here mainly understood as balancing out differences between social classes. Mainly these differences are assumed to be material – the “economic successful” and the “large masses” are standing against each other (ibid) – but these differences also include uneven access to power, wealth, cultural development or democratic participation. (ibid: 47)

The educational gap between generations is discussed as a major problem related to higher education – the educational incline between the generations implies a risk to reinforce class society. (ibid:75) Adult education is presented as an important measure to overcome this gap and here the higher education sector is given a rather new role. The equality-committee started sketching a concept of recurrent education (återkommande utbildning) as the future concept for the tertiary sector. In order to avoid a knowledge gap between newly educated people and people that finished their education at an earlier time a system of alternately periods of education and working was proposed. The regular school time should be followed by a number working years before a new period of education should start. In result higher education should be realised as a form of further education. The alternation of periods of work and periods of education was thought as a way to overcome traditional valuation of professions and increase equality in society. (ibid:86f.)

Parallel to the equality-committee the so-called U68-group started its work. This group was set up by the Swedish Social Democratic government in order to evaluate the higher education sector and develop suggestions for reforms. The final report on Swedish higher education was presented in 1973. (SOU 1973) Meanwhile this reform – finally enacted in 1977 – was popularly known as the “rolling reform” since it took so long for the reform to become written law.

The concept of recurrent education was also promoted by the U68-group, but the motivation had slightly shifted. The argument of equality was put at second place instead the advantage of having well educated people on the labour market was promulgated. Recurrent education could provide shorter and more occupational-oriented education awarding merits for professional advancement. This shift in argumentation is not surprising, already the directives given to the U68 group were characterised by a clear focus on the relation between higher education and the labour market. The

² Social Democracy has been in government in North-Rhine Westphalia from 1966 on. Until 1988 the government contained out of a coalition with the Liberal party, from that year until 1995 Social Democracy was the only party in government. In 1995 the coalition government with the Green party was established.
Minister for Education – at that time Olof Palme – explained clearly “that post-secondary education has to be focused on the future profession”. (Swedish Ministry for Education 1968)

The reform started in 1977, its major result was the enlargement of the tertiary sector. The definition of higher education (högskolebegreppet) received a broader content. Certain educational programmes – that earlier were excluded from higher education – now, were incorporated into the tertiary sector. Among them, there were the programmes for nurses, nursery-school teachers or in applied arts. Due to this small change of definition the number of students increased to 150,000 from 100,000. (Richardson 1999:177) Since even the entry requirements for higher education were changing – also experiences in working life were now defined as appropriate qualifications (Higher Education Act 1977: §§7, 9) – and the concept of recurrent education was introduced, the number of students was expected to grow even further.

According to the Higher Education Act of 1977, higher education has to serve three main functions; these are be the two classical tasks education and research and additionally the spreading of the results of research. (Higher Education Act 1977: §6) The third point is rather interesting as it defines the higher education sector in relation to societal sectors. In general, the reform of 1977 is characterised by the attempt to relate higher education more to the labour market. Even though higher education should “support the students’ personal development” (Higher Education Act 1977: §2), “all education became in principle vocational training with focus on a defined labour market”.

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The reform of 1977 implied a tendency towards homogeneity among institutions of higher education. In contrast to a rather diverse system before the reform the Swedish higher education system after 1977 contained mainly out of two types of higher education institutions: Universities and university colleges (högskolor). Even though the Swedish system of higher education is mainly perceived as a homogenous system – in both the political rhetoric and scientific literature – in fact it turns out to be a “hidden binary system” (Dahlöff 1996:200), since the two types of higher education institutions serve rather different functions. The universities have to be seen as the rather “classic” institutions of higher education, since they have research resources and provide post-graduate education. The university colleges are mainly responsible for undergraduate education. In line with the binary character of the higher education system even the career path was divided into a path for a teaching career and a path for a research career. Since a professorship implies research duties, the university colleges hardly ever employed professors and could not provide a research career path.

The reform was meant to open the higher education system for new cohorts and to avoid unfair patterns of participation. A good supply of higher education institutions in all regions was seen as a way to open equal access and abandon social uneven recruitment. The result was a gendered system, since university colleges mainly responded to education in disciplines that were dominated by women. The “hidden binary system” worked against women, the fact that university colleges usually had no research resources and though could not offer post-graduate education or a research career path was excluding women from career opportunities leading to top rank positions in academia, i.e. a possible professorship.

As a result the Swedish Social Democratic higher education policy of the 1960’s and 1970’s was eager to provide an even supply of higher education for all regions in order to realise a more even recruitment among the social classes and the generations. The consequences of horizontal segregation in higher education were not taken into account.

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6 The Government Bill of 1977 introducing the reform was by a government containing out of a coalition between the Centre party, the Moderates and the Peoples party, with Thorbjörn Fälldin (CP) as State Minister and Jan-Erik Wikström (PP) as Minister for Education and Science. Nevertheless, I treat this reform as result of Social Democratic higher education policy, because of several reasons: Firstly, the reform of Swedish higher education of 1977 dates back until the 1960’s; its guidelines and focus were set up by the social democratic government at that time. Since the Swedish government of 1976 did use the results of this reform planning process, it is appropriate to assume a continuity in the process of reform-development and higher education planning. Additionally, the motives and aims of the political parties concerning educational policy were not really diverging after the Second World War. Svanfeldt states a consensus among the political parties in Sweden to create an efficient and mainly economically well founded educational system. (Svanfeldt 1993:343)
Germany and North-Rhine Westphalia

In the opposite to Swedish education policy in Germany was hardly integrated into parliamentary work or the priority setting of political parties until the 1960’s. Turner speaks even of “an absence of politicians with a special interest in education in the parliaments and parties at the end of the 50’s”. (2001:18) Due to the missing integration of education policy in the political practices of parties and parliaments, other forces had to fill this gap in the political discussion during the early 1960’s. In the beginning of the 1960’s the OECD published its prognoses of the future demands of academic staff. The German discussion about these prognoses was introduced by the book of Edding (1963). One year later Georg Picht published his book about the “educational catastrophe” (Bildungskatastrophe), which probably is the most known publication in this context. The term of the “educational crisis” (Bildungsnotstand) came into use and the discussion that followed was mainly based on the assumption that economic prosperity was a precondition and a result of educational policy. (Turner 2001:21)

German higher education policy during the 1960’s follows the goal of enlargement. Between 1965 and 1975 not less than 25 new universities were funded (Turner 2001:33). The number of students increased from nearly 250.000 in 1960 to about 690.000 in 1975 (ibid). As Maier (1994) could show only 20 per cent of this expansion were due to demographic developments, but 80 per cent have to be seen as caused by social and economic reasons (Turner 2001:33)

Already in the mid-1960’s it became clear, that the universities had not the capacity to cope with the growing number of students. At the same time the universities had to face harsh criticism: The oligarchic organisation of higher education, teaching methods just as the critical past of a range of professors were criticised by authors like Picht or the students’ movement. Democratic structures and transparency in decision making within the institutions of higher education were among the most precious demands. The students’ movements is often interpreted as the force that made the defects of the German higher education system visible and though enforced the political reform-will of the 1960’s. This interpretation neglects the fact that the Research Council (Wissenschaftsrat) – founded in 1957 by an initiative of the Bund and the Lands – published its recommendations on reforms in higher education nearly ten years before the students’ movement had its biggest influence and the reform-policy started. (see also Turner 2001:17) The will to reforms was expressed e.g. in an inaugural speech of Willy Brandt, saying: “education and vocational training (Ausbildung), science and research are at the top of priorities of the reforms”. (Deutscher Bundestag 1969:26) At the same time he sketches also the borderlines of this reform will: “The realisation of the necessary reforms and the continuing increase of wealth is only possible with growing economy and good finances.” (Deutscher Bundestag 1969:21)

Even though the enlargement of the higher education system by founding new universities continued, a strong reform-will enforced the introduction of new types of higher education institutions. In 1968 the Fachhochschulen were introduced. This new type of institution was planned as institutions that provide shorter educational programmes with stronger focus on praxis and vocational training. With this kind of educational programmes the universities should have been relieved. At the same time a cohort of academicians with an education more suitable to the labour market was expected.

Parallel to the introduction of the Fachhochschulen a new concept of higher education institution was developed and discussed. The idea of the comprehensive universities (Gesamthochschulen) became a political issue for all political parties. The discussion started when the Christian Democratic government of the Land Baden-Württemberg presented its plan for higher education (Hochschulgesamtplan) in 1967 and proposed a concept of a differentiated or co-operative comprehensive university (differenzierte / kooperative Gesamthochschule). This concept was aiming at a co-operation between different types of higher education institutions. The institutions would keep their autonomy, but the co-operation would enable them to make their educational programmes more permeable. (Lüth 1983:30; Turner 2001:92)

The concept of the co-operative comprehensive universities was rather a model preferred by the Christian Democratic forces. As an alternative the integrated comprehensive universities (integrierte Gesamthochschule) were discussed by the Social Democratic side and the Liberals. Also the Research Council and the Association of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions in West-Germany (Westdeutsche Rektorenkonferenz) followed this line. (Turner 2001:94; Lüth 1983:29) The concept of the integrated comprehensive university is aiming at a unification of different types of higher education institutions into one institution. Within each discipline represented in the
comprehensive university there should be different educational programmes diverging in content, length and goals. This structure was thought as being most appropriate to fit the students needs. (Turner 2001:94)

In 1971 the Minister for Science and Research of North-Rhine Westphalia – Johannes Rau - (Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen 1971), he produced a “drum beat in higher education policy” (Oehler 2000:212) when he presented his theses on the comprehensive universities. Referring to the “enlargement of the educational system that is pursued on the national level” and the goal of a “improvement of the equality of chances” (Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen 1971:11) a reform of study programmes was promised. It was also planned to create new places of study under the premise that regional needs and demands are taken into account (Regionalisierung). The enlargement of the higher education system was not only seen as a way to improve “a regions chances for development” but also as a measure to increase “equality of chances”. The latter term did not refer to equality between sexes – as it is mainly understood today – instead it referred to the fact that “underprivileged sections of society cannot afford higher education for their children at a place far away”. (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 1971:23)

The introduction of integrated comprehensive universities was another goal of Johannes Rau. In Duisburg, Essen, Paderborn, Siegen and Wuppertal comprehensive universities were planned. (Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen 1971:11) The foundation of the new comprehensive universities was based on the unification of already existing pedagogical colleges and Fachhochschulen. But the concept of the Minister for Science and Research was broader than this: Integrated comprehensive universities were seen as a concept for the entire system of higher education in North-Rhine Westphalia. Also at the other locations of higher education comprehensive universities were planned to be established. In these cases – which means the locations in Aachen, Bielefeld, Bochum, Bonn, Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Köln and Münster – universities were planned to be united with pedagogical colleges, Fachhochschulen or academies of arts. (Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen 1971:12 & 15f.) By introducing the integrated comprehensive university as standard in the Land certain goals were intended: The study-time should become more intense and shorter, a graduated system of degrees should be realised and the capacities of the higher education institutions should be used more effectively. One year later Johannes Rau was strengthening its earlier position by explaining: “The goals of the university-reform, (...) – equality of chances, permeability, improvement of professional mobility, flexibility -, can according to our convictions only be realised by a new system of study-programmes that overcomes the borders of traditional types of higher education institutions. This in turn presupposes the association of present types of higher education institutions into one organisation-unit.“ (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 1972:1539C)

Between 1971 and 1974 eleven comprehensive universities were founded in Germany – six of them in North-Rhine Westphalia and when the first Framework Act for Higher Education was enacted in 1976 the general goal of comprehensive universities was included. Most of the time the comprehensive universities were established based on already existing higher education institutions. The Y-model became the most common way to realise the integration of different study programmes: After a common time of basic courses (Grundstudium) the students can decide to finish their studies within a shorter programme – which leads to a degree comparable with one of a Fachhochschule – or within a longer programme – which leads to a university degree. (Turner 2001:95)

Just as in Sweden the aspect of broad supply of Higher Education and the focus on regional developments was a major moment in German Social Democratic higher education policy during the 1960’s and 1970’s. Also here the reforms implied important changes in the structure of the higher education system. The German reform-commitment ended in the middle of the 1970’s. Not only that the Framework Act for Higher Education finally was introduced, in general in new political period began. The new chancellor Helmut Schmidt represented a shift from reform-optimism to pragmatic realism, that became obvious in his governmental speech when he pronounced that the state is seeking the trust and identification of the employees – the trust and identification of the citizens is not mentioned. (Bundesregierung 1974: 26)
The 1980’s and 1990’s – Discovering A New Target Group

While the debate of the 1960’s and 1970’s focused on access to higher education, aspects of research – international academic competition – and career structures became predominant in Social Democratic higher education policies of the 1980’s and 1990’s. The former focus on participation of different social classes in higher education was replaced by debates about career perspectives of future academic generations and women’s participation in academia.

Sweden

The reform of Swedish higher education of 1977 gave not only a new structure to the entire system; it also implicated a huge degree of national regulation and planning. Tenure teaching positions for example were shaped and appointed by the Swedish government. During the early 1980’s the new higher education system in Sweden had to struggle with some “problems of adjustment” (Richardson 1999:179), especially the new system of study-programmes caused some problems. At a first look it might seem as if the next wave of large-scale reform changes would have started at the beginning of the 1990’s when the conservative government was in charge. It is true, that the reform in 1993 actually removed reins of national regulation and gave more influence and responsibility to the institutions of higher education, especially in questions of finances and organisation, but this can not be understood as a policy completely contrary to the Social Democratic position. According to Richardson the period of “revolution of freedom” has to be dated between 1988 and 1993 (1999:184). In 1988 the abolishing of centrally proposed study-plans was decided. The introduction of a new resource allocation system based on three-year frame budgets in 1993 was decided already in 1989. Though the “development from planning towards follow-up, evaluation and controlling” (Richardson 1999: 183) was originally started by the Social Democratic government and despite certain exceptions the policy of deregulation enforced by the Moderate government was realised “in political agreement” (Richardson 1999:181)

The expansion of the tertiary sector continued under this time period. Already during the 1980’s did Swedish parliamentarians discovered higher education as a “tempting instrument of regional policy – both during the first years of serious unemployment and later during marked prosperity” (Richardson 1999:180). The number of university colleges founded during this time period is rather small, instead a range of former university colleges were transformed into universities – in other words higher education institutions without research resources became institutions with research resources. A transformation that opened ways for new educational programmes and career opportunities.

In 1995 the Social Democratic Minister for Education and Research – Carl Tham – presented a government bill to the Swedish parliament that was meant to improve women’s opportunities in the educational sector and to strengthen the feminist position within research and teaching. The so called Tham-decree was related to about 30 professorships and 70 posts for research associates that were created in order to increase equal opportunities, it also completed the Ordinance for Higher Education in that sense that an applicant of the underrepresented sex should be preferred as long as the qualifications were sufficient to fulfil the requirements of the professorship.

There is no doubt that the Tham-decree had an “emancipatory potential” (Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research 1999:14). In its analysis of women’s position in the higher education sector it pays attention to structural unbalance between women and men, this means to vertical and horizontal segregation (Swedish Government 1994/95:21) and to male dominance (Swedish Government 1994/95:21 & 33). Simply that the government actually did show awareness of the fact that changes in the quantitative representation of the sexes may have an impact on acceptance and career chances must be notified.

Despite the emancipatory potential of the analysis the argumentation on why women should be promoted is rather problematic. Women’s under-representation is seen as a democratic problem – women are missing at levels at higher education institutions where decisions are made (Swedish Government 1994/95:21) – and as a problem of lacking quality and knowledge – because women are underrepresented their perspective is missing in teaching and research7 (Swedish Government 1994/95:23).

7 Regarding to this point the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research is stating: “The bill underscores the need for changes in attitudes regarding the so-called utilitarian point of view on gender equality.” (1999:7) In the Swedish version of the quoted report the Secretariat for Gender Research uses the term “nyttoaspekt” (aspect of usefulness) instead of “utilitaristisk synsätt” (utilitarian point of view). I do not use the terms “utilitarian point of
The problematic aspect in this argumentation is that it is based upon the assumption that women and men are different. It is assumed that women have “experiences, point of view and formulation of problems” (Swedish Government 1994/95:21) that men do not have just because they belong to a certain sex – an approach that is “ambiguous and risk reinforcing the structural imbalance between the sexes.” (Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research 1999:7) The Swedish government was not aware of this risk, it becomes clear when it is stated that: “Introducing parallel-professorships in disciplines where research with a gender perspective could complete traditional research in a fruitful way could open new horizons in research.” (Swedish Government 1994/95:29) Gender-research and though women’s experiences, point of view and formulation of problems are placed as complementary. Parallel-professorships are simply added to the traditional (male-dominated) academic system that is understood as the norm. Women and feminist research remain as diverging from norm. (see also discussion in Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research 1999)

Later the Tham-decree became an object for the Court of Justice of the European Communities, that did not approve the decree, since it missed transparency. Without objective estimation of the applicant’s qualification the decree would contain the risk of automatism and the importance of objective estimation was already pronounced in the Marshall-case (C-409/95; ECR 1997 p.I-6363). Finally the aspired aim of equal opportunities and the enforced selection method was not in parity.

In 1997 the Swedish government decided to introduce a promotion reform in academia. The goal was to double the number of professors within the following years, to ensure a more even distribution of different academic working tasks and to improve women’s participation in academic top rank positions. The reform was enacted in 1999 and implied that the former model of two different career paths – a teaching and a research career – was transformed into a model of a single career path in order to revalue teaching compared to research. The idea was that both merits in research and pedagogical skills should be taken into account when it comes to the appointment of academic staff. Further, a system of (self-) promotion was introduced, which implies that people with appropriate qualifications can apply to advance on the academic career ladder. A lecturer who becomes qualified by completing her or his dissertation can be promoted to a senior lecturer – under the precondition that the person applied for promotion. Similar, a senior lecturer can apply for the title of a professor, given necessary formal qualifications in research. Also the development of extensive teaching skills can be the basis for promotion. When the promotion-system was introduced, it was assumed that a reserve of research talent existed within the academic staff and that people would take advance of the new promotion-system, because they could use their talent in a better way due to the title of professor.

**Germany and North-Rhine Westphalia**

During the 1980’s in Germany it became obvious that the prognoses on future numbers of students that were made in the 1970’s were based on wrong assumptions. When Bund and Lands agreed on the “opening-decision” in 1977 they expected the number of students to decrease during the 1980’s. That is why they decided to enlarge the capacities of the higher education institutions by “overload-quotas” (Überlastquoten). Higher education institutions should provide education for a number of students that was larger than the capacity of the institutions. This was thought as a short-term solution for a time period when larger student-cohorts were entering higher education, but it turned out that the expected decrease of numbers of students did not happen, instead universities had to educate more students by limited resources. (compare Turner 2001:27ff. & 35)

Additionally it turned out that not social demand but the need after academicians on the labour market was the dominant factor. (Oehler 1998:124) As a result the higher education planning was replaced by a “combination of strategies for rationalisation and incentives of the market” (Oehler 1998:121). The focus in higher education policy shifted slightly from questions of expansion, types of higher education institutions or equal access towards structural problems for research and academic careers. In other words: German politicians discovered the rising generation of scientists as the „decisive resource“ (Führ 1996:210) and German Social Democracy was not diverging from that line. When the government of North-Rhine Westphalia in 1985 claimed to aim at a “ecological and economical renewal” (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 1985:30A) it also marked a stronger focus on the view” or “utilitarianism”. Firstly, because they do not appear in the government bill itself and secondly, because I interpret the Carl Tham’s argument not as clearly developed from a utilitarian point of view.
research done in higher education, since the government was running a “offensive in technology and research-policy” (ibid:30A). At the same time the promotion of future cohorts of scientists and the improvement of “women’s opportunities in research and teaching” (ibid:36A) was placed on the political agenda.

Three years later the North-Rhine Westphalian Minister for Science and Research – Anke Brunn – published guidelines and goals for the future development of the higher education sector in North-Rhine Westphalia. Higher education is seen as a “motor for structural change” and the economic and ecological renewal in North-Rhine Westphalia (Minister für Wissenschaft und Forschung in Nordrhein-Westfalen 1988:45f.). The importance of top research is pronounced (ibid:49) just as the goal to promote women on research and teaching (ibid:57f.) and to encourage people with working class background and women to start higher education (ibid:41f.). The Minister wants to ensure to keep the participation rate of working class and women in the level reached in 1988 and even wants to improve this result. At the same time it is pronounced that this goal is only to reach if the federal government would change the regulation for student-aid. Otherwise the Minister does not say very much about measures to encourage working class people in higher education, in contrast the promotion of women takes a more outstanding position, as examples the introduction of commissioners for women’s issues at higher education institutions in 1987 or the proposal for a Law for the promotion of women within the public sector (Gesetz zur Förderung von Frauen im öffentlichen Dienst) shall be mentioned.

Special attention is paid to already successful projects like the introduction of Germany’s largest Network for Gender-studies (Netzwerk Frauenforschung Nordrhein-Westfalen) which was founded by the Ministry for Research and Science in North-Rhine Westphalia in 1986 – based on the initiative of engaged female scientists. In 1988 the Network contained out of eight professorships but grew rather fast, in 1992 there were already 24 professorships and the recent number is up to 45 professorships at 21 universities (Netzwerk Frauenforschung Nordrhein-Westfalen 2003). By promoting women in gender-studies within a network-structure an interdisciplinary co-operation between different disciplines could be realised additionally a higher representation of female scientists was meant as an important step to improve women’s chances in higher education. Until 1999 the Network was mainly financed out of the Third Special Programme for Higher Education (Hochschulsonderprogramm III) initiated by the national government.8

In the same year the Third Special Programme for Higher Education was ending the government of North-Rhine Westphalia introduced the so-called “Quality-pact”. The idea based on two major agreements: Firstly, the universities and university colleges could consider their budget-sums as “safe” within the following five years, which means that they did not have to face economy measures within this time period. Secondly, an “innovation-found” of 100 million German marks was planned to be established. This sum corresponds to the costs for about 1000 positions within the academy; it became the task of the higher education institutions to reduce the number of positions within ten years. (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 1999:8911C/D) An expert council was set up in order to evaluate the situation on higher education, the profiles of the higher education institutions and the potential for economical reductions or restructuring. Based on the recommendations of the expert group the Ministry planned to sign agreements on goals with the institutions of higher education, meaning a system of goals and achievements was introduced.

Since universities tend to put professorships in gender studies on lists for reductions over-proportionally (Netzwerk Frauenforschung Nordrhein-Westfalen 2003) the Minister for Research and Science pronounced the governments interest in keeping the network alive in a letter to the expert council. (Expertenrat 2001:181) The recommendation of the expert council regarding “research on women and promotion of women” (ibid:181) are rather humble. The council “is recommending the government and the higher education institutions to include the promotion of women as a original cross-sectional tasks of the institutions of higher education.” (ibid:184) At the same time refuses the

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8 The Third Special Programme for Higher Education was enacted 1996 on the initiative of the federal government of Germany. Until the year 2000 the Special Programme should provide 3,6 thousand million marks for the promotion of the new generation of academics and the renewal of the higher education sector in the eastern part of Germany. 2 thousand million marks were provided by the federal government, the rest was paid by the Lands. The earlier Special Programmes – enacted in 1989 and 1990 – were meant to support the expansion of the tertiary educational sector and also to improve the situation of future academicians. Also these programmes were financed by both the Bund and the Lands. (compare Turner 2000:27f.)
council to make any more detailed statements on equal opportunity measures introduced by the
government. (ibid)

According to the council the Network for Gender-Studies should continue its work, because
the German academic system “has lot to catch up regarding gender studies” and the Network would be
a contribution in order “to close up to international standards” (ibid:182). Shortly speaking gender
studies are understood as demanded by the international scientific competition – not as a contribution
to equality in society.

Some Comments on the Outcome
The following part is meant to give some comments on the outcome of the higher education policies
described above. Not all impacts of higher education policies have been issue for investigation and
data provided by national or regional statistics do not always cover all variables of interest, this is why
the discussion presented here cannot be complete. Nevertheless, taking the data and investigations
available into consideration allows some critical comments on the success of Social Democratic higher
education policies.

Improved Chances for Working Class?
In order to answer the question “Did Social Democratic higher education policy really improve the
chances for working class people or people with a lower social background?” it seems naturally to take
a look at participation rates – and here the picture looks rather positive. In Germany the participation
rate of students with working class background increased from about 6 per cent in the mid-1960’s up
to 16 per cent in 1994 (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung 1995:46). In later
investigations the categories of employment (blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, civil servants,
self-employed) is mainly replaced by categories of social origin (low, medium, elevated, high). A
recent study on the social situation of German students shows that the percentage of students coming
from the social group categorised with “low” decreased from 23 per cent in 1982 to 13 per cent in
2000 (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung 2001:109). Even though the categories “blue
collar workers” and “low social origin” are not the same, one could conclude that the educational
chances of working class people did increase until the 1980’s and then decreased. But since equality of
chances does not refer to the participation rate, but on the impact that social origin has on educational
chances, a more detailed investigation of this question becomes necessary. Unfortunately the number
of studies related to chances in education are rather low. An outstanding exception is the publication
of Blossfeld and Shavit (1993) that compares chances in the educational systems of thirteen different
countries – among them also Germany and Sweden. Beside all enlargement policy and equality
rhetoric it turned out that the impact of social origin remained mainly stable. Only two countries are an
exception from that, these are the Netherlands and Sweden.

For the case of Germany an analysis of the educational attainment showed “that despite an
impressive increase in the average level of highest education, the effect of father’s socio-economic
background on the highest level of educational attainment remains remarkably stable.” (Blossfeld
1993:62) Furthermore the effects of social background on the transition probabilities in the entire
education system were tested, “no significant change in the effects of social background on the grade
probabilities for men and women across cohorts” were found. (ibid: 73) Blossfeld is interpreting these
results as supporting the hypothesis of maximally maintained inequality. This hypothesis is stating that
changes in the effect of social origin only occur if the enrolment of the advantaged groups is already
so high that an expansion of the educational sector can only be realised by giving children from
disadvantaged group a better chance of making transition. (ibid: 73) In other words: the disadvantaged
groups can only gain improved chances of an enlargement process if a certain level of saturation is
reached for the advantaged groups.

For the case of Sweden Jonsson could show that “the importance of a number of background
characteristics – parent’s class position and cultural capital, type of community and sex – has
decreased.” Furthermore “the social class distribution has become less biased at both secondary and
tertiary levels of education.” (Jonsson 1993:124) Nevertheless, Jonsson does not necessarily see his
findings as an indicator for a successful educational policy. “(E)ducational reform does not guarantee
equalization and is probably not even a necessary condition for it.” (ibid:126) According to Jonsson it
would be necessary for future research to examine the impact on changes on the labour market on
situations of (in-)equality in the educational sector. (ibid:127) The shrinking sex differences in education shown in the data might be caused by an increasing demand for female labour that was a result of the expansion of the public sector in Sweden. (ibid:125;101) Also the general improvement of living conditions, like the decrease of income differences or changes in characteristics of labour that influenced the equalisation for working class might have had an impact on educational chances. (ibid:126) Beside all positive results, it is not sure that the reform policy of the 1960’s and 1970’s really had a positive impact on educational chances of working class Sweden.

Improved Career Perspectives for Women?
During the last decades the educational gender gap actually reversed. Today female students make more than 50 per cent of the total studentship. Also the numbers of women with a position of a full professorship increased during the last decades. In Germany the percentage of female professors grew from hardly one per cent in the mid-1960’s up to 6 per cent in 1998 – if even the lower ranks of professorships are included the percentage is nearly 15 per cent. Data collection on academic staff began in Sweden 1984, at that time 6 per cent of all professors were women today the percentage grew up to 14 per cent. Not unlike the participation rates of working class these numbers are no help evaluating women’s real chances in higher education. Unfortunately there are no larger investigations about the statistical chances for women to advance on the academic career ladder, comparable to the work of Blossfeld or Jonsson for working class. This is why the question if the political measures of the 1980’s and 1990’s really were working in favour of women has to be based on other data-material.

For the case of Sweden a study on the outcome of the promotion-reform of 1999 has been published. The major problem of the reform turns out to be insufficient finances. The political goal to double the total numbers of professors is very likely to be reached, but at the same time the “promotion-system risk (…) to be seen as a title-reform.” (National Agency for Higher Education 2003:17) This means the reform enables more academicians to receive the title of a professor, but their working tasks and salaries remain nearly at the level of senior lecturers. (compare National Agency for Higher Education 2003:43f.) There is no doubt that one intention of the reform was to “break the empire of professors” (ibid:14) and the increasing number of professors might in fact have an impact on the status of professorships. At the same time the reform created two different leagues of professors, since a look at working tasks and salary make it visible if a professor was recruited according to the established system or if she or he was promoted.

One major assumption of the reform was, that the new promotion path would work in favour of women. It turned out that women have just as high a chance to be promoted as their male colleges. However, women are less likely to apply for promotion. Among the applicants for promotion only 22 per cent were women, while women’s percentage among qualified senior lecturer was 24 per cent in 1998 and 34 per cent in 1999. As a result it can be said that primarily because the reform was not financed, it both became a mere title-reform and did not become a means of promoting women into top rank positions in Swedish academia.

In general the majority of political enforced measures to promote women faced harsh criticism. When governments began to discover women as a political target group and promoted equal opportunity measures, the problem “women and science” did receive “a high amount of rhetorical presence.” (Wetterer 1998:19) But the rhetoric attention did not change the “actual marginalisation” (ibid:18) of women in academia, because most of the politically enforced equal opportunity measures lack success. The reason for this was partly already mentioned above in the criticism of the Swedish Secretary for Gender Research regarding the Tham-decree: The introduced attempts to improve women’s career chances in academia are built upon the understanding that women’s participation in higher education is something additional, something to complete the mainstream – but not as being essential for the academy. (compare also Wetterer 1998:23)

A look at the logic and consequences of the major reform attempts and programmes for women’s promotion underline the criticisms mentioned above. To introduce special positions for women that are related to a gender approach in research and teaching – like the Tham-decree did – is not suitable to challenge the academic system, since these positions remain as something outside the “real” academic world. (see considerations above) In Germany the Special Programmes for Higher Education were intended to promote women. The problem here remains the same as for the Tham-decree: most of the new positions were introduced regarding gender-studies and often they were not
transformed into regular positions. This means as soon as the political will to spend any special money on these positions is decreasing, these positions become extremely vulnerable.

Promotion strategies that are built upon the assumption that women are different simply because they are women do not challenge the academic system. On the contrary, they transform a structural problem into a personal one and contribute to the marginalisation of women in the academic world. Keeping this in mind the attempts made by Social Democratic governments to realise equality of chances between the sexes has to be seen as inadequate and partly even contra-productive.

**Summary**
During the 1960’s and 1970’s Social Democratic governments in Sweden and Germany followed a strategy of enlargement in their higher education policies. The main idea – presented in the policy documents of that time – was that a broader supply of higher education would increase the life-chances of people from lower social classes or with a lower educational background. In the following years the numbers of higher education institutions, students and academic staff increased rapidly. Nevertheless the political goals of that time were not realised. As it has been shown the enlargement of the educational system did not challenge the allocation structures for working class people in higher education. An enlargement of the total system meant to increase the educational level of all social groups and did not change the procedures and structures of access and allocation. “Thus, educational expansion may even account for the stable patterns of educational stratification. It is a well-known fact that the larger the pie, the less the conflict as to the relative size of the slices.” (Blossfeld / Shavit 1993:22) The enlargement policy was rather a strategy to create social peace than an appropriate measure to challenge the allocation structure in higher education.

In contrast to the intended result of Social Democratic enlargement policies women turned out to be the winners of this strategy, their participation rate in higher education increased since the 1970’s and the educational gender gap has been reversed. (compare Blossfeld / Shavit 1993:21) As a result, women gained on a policy originally not intended for them. Then, during the 1980’s and 1990’s women appeared as a group of interest in Social Democratic policy documents. The gender question was integrated into the rhetoric on equality in higher education, now the term “equality of chances” referred more to the life-chances of the sexes than to the chances of different social classes.

Developments in Social Democratic Higher Education Policies in Sweden and Germany

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It is also interesting to notice that – when it came to the gender question – Social Democratic governments were even willing to choose measures that would challenge the established structures in higher education. In both countries measures like quotation rates were on the political agenda even though hotly debated. Nevertheless, during the 1960’s or 1970’s such attempts were not made in order to promote lower social classes. There are a few explanations for that: Firstly, a feminist view or the goal to improve women’s position in society is not solely a left wing topic. To promote women caused less political opposition than an open promotion of working class or lower social classes would have – especially since women were discovered as potential voters by nearly all political parties during the 1980’s. In other words a more open opportunity structure for feminist questions and goals in general was probably one reason to make a stronger statement for women’s position in the higher education sector. Secondly, it was possible for Social Democratic governments to relate to their – unintended – success in promoting women during the 1970’s. Nevertheless, the measures undertaken to promote women were unsuccessful, since they based upon the assumption of difference between women and men and continued to define female academics as outside mainstream research.

The comparison of Social Democratic higher education policies shows that Social Democracy actually did adapt to changing frame conditions. The central term in policy-rhetoric remained the same during the last forty years, but the contend shifted: since the 1980’s “equality of chances” was not longer related to lower social classes but to the equality between sexes. To pursue equality between sexes is not only less controversial, it also responds to the fact that Social Democracy cannot survive by relying on its traditional core-votership.

A look at the rhetoric of Social Democratic governments at the end of the 1990’s gives a rather surprising picture, since traditional Social Democratic goals seem to reappear. In his inaugural speech the German chancellor Gerhard Schröder made clear: “The purse of the parents is not allowed to decide about the life-chances in our society.” (Deutscher Bundestag 1998:55B) In Sweden the Minister for Education and Research Tomas Östros demands a return to the ideals of the Tage-Erlander-period.9 (Dagens Forskning 2002:11) Whether this rhetoric is the result of a real return to classical Social Democratic values or if it has been invoked as a strategy in electoral competition and what impact this might have on the debate on social justice in the educational sector, will only be seen in future studies.

References

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9 Tage Erlander was Swedish State-minister from 1946 until 1969. He introduced the term of the „strong society“ (*det starka samhället*) and represented a policy based on the expansion of the public sector.
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