

The MPA Programme: A Tool in Creating a Learning Community

Cross-border University

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Background

- Karlstad University in Sweden and Hedmark University College in Norway
- MPA 1 2000-2002; MPA 2 2002-2004; MPA 3 2005-2007
- At the start: inspired by the CBS; "borrowed" their basic structure. Gradually further developed
- 40-50 participants; Norway and Sweden
- Top and middle management

Background (2)

- A 90 credits programme: organisational theory, political science (public administration), management economics (financial control), strategy and change, regional and local development, International Governance, master's dissertation and methodology
- Historic dimension, comparison, themes, multi-theoretical perspective, context

Philosophy

- **The Subject:** Penetrate a dynamic public sector in a complex world where the traditional forms of organizing and steering are challenged. Handle "hybrids".
- **In Swedish-Norwegian Relationship:**
Mutuality
- **Attitudes:** Be open, generous, respectful, helpful; no prestige-mindedness – lots of humour

Participants

- **Geographically:** most from Inner Scandinavia
- **Public sector:** most from regional and local authorities (some state, private, NGO)
- **Professions:** huge variety (medical doctors, nurses, lawyers, social scientists, teachers; also politicians, consultants)
- **Equality:** 60 % women
- **Age:** 35-60

Features

- 20 meetings, Thursday-Saturday, in various towns in Inner Scandinavia
- Financial support from the EU
- Strong focus on social aspects and networks: internationally, professionally (staff), among participants and with society
- Model for learning: challenges, reflection, confidence, recognition and feed-back;
- Slow learning; double-loop

Networks - four types

- International (inspire, exchange of ideas, secure quality)
- Professionell (developing courses, two countries, many professions; no prestige)
- Participants (social understanding, generous attitude; alumni)
- Societal (open programme, co-arranging; a part in the development of Inner Scandinavia)

Reference Group - functions

- Help recruit participants
- Give views of the content of courses
- Spread information of open programme
- Bring their own organisation in the arranging of conferences
- Legitimize

Open Programme

- Conferences – so far ten (2000-2006); in co-operation with public institutions
- Open lectures – new for MPA 3 – starts every meeting
- Reference Groups: important people in Public Sector; earlier MPA-participants

Conferences 2000-02

- October 2000, Karlstad: Organizing the Regional Level.
- March 2001, Hamar: The Challenged Public Leadership
- March 2002, Hamar: Leadership in a Competitive Public Sector
- November 2002, Karlstad: Mass media and Public Leadership. When the unexpected happens and when politics is “hot”

Conferences 2003-04

- March 2003, Hamar: Challenges of “the new municipality”
- October 2003, Hamar: Regionalization
- February 2004, Rena: The female leadership – is that something special?

Conferences 2006

- March 2005, Hamar: What can we learn from Cutback management? Theories and practices.
- December 2005, Karlstad: Networks, Co-operations and Partnerships
- February 2006, Hamar: Public Leadership – ideals, values and dilemmas
- October 2006, Karlstad: Strategic Leadership in Public Sector

Open Programme 05/06

- 29/9-05 Rena, Norway: Re-organizing the Norwegian defence. Drastic change and cutbacks. Open lecture.
- 27/10 Kongsvinger, Norway: What does Culture mean for Democracy and Economy? What can we learn from four different cultural theories? Open lecture.
- 1-2/12 Karlstad, Sweden: Co-operation, Networks and partnerships. A shift of political and administrative system? Conference.
- 20/1-06 Arvika, Sweden: The new role of the Politician. How to cope with all different arenas and relationships? Open lecture.

Open programme (2)

- 23-24/2 Hamar, Norway: Dilemmas of the public leader. What ideals should a top official try to live up to (the effective and efficient, the politically loyal, the networking and co-operative, the professional, the good morale example, the good administrator etc.)? Conference.
- 31/3 Falun, Sweden: What is the status of NPM today? Recent experiences. Open lecture.
- 4/5 Hamar, Norway: Balanced Scorecard. Is that the answer to the business administrative challenges of the public sector today? Open lecture.
- 9/6 Karlstad, Sweden: the International Political System and how the regional and local levels are affected. Open lecture.

Open programme (3)

- 24/8-06 Arvika: Media Strategy: how the public leader could handle media
- 28/9-06 Falun: Budget and cutback theories
- 26-27/10-06 Karlstad: Strategic leadership in Public Sector (conference)
- 7/12-06 Hamar: Public service policy from a regional perspective
- 18/12-07 Oslo: Immigrant integration policies in Sweden and Norway

Evaluations etc.

- Expectations are mapped
- Every meeting follow-up questionnaire
- Every course evaluated (7 criteria)
- The programme is evaluated (60 items)
- Result so far: very positive!
- Example from MPA 2: 97% would recommend colleague to apply for MPA 3

At last

- An exciting journey
- Tough job
- Great fun!
- Hope for a MPA 4 in 2008