

Sonja Leidenberger

University of Skövde

Co-author: Andreas Kalckert

## The professional PhD supervisor - a reflection on current regulations in Swedish PhD education

### Abstract

The higher education sector underwent a rapid transformation in the past (Adkins, 2009). Interest in third-cycle education has particularly increased and a common ambition is the professionalisation of the education.

Sweden's higher education sector is characterised by a high level of marketisation, decentralisation and individualisation (Alexiadou & Lundahl, 2016, Lundahl et al., 2013). This poses new challenges in the education system and is a particular demand for the supervisor(s).

Both authors have a natural sciences background and completed their studies at universities in Germany. They practiced their doctoral studies abroad before joining the University of Skövde in Sweden as senior lecturers. Their roles encompass various responsibilities, such as teaching, administrative duties at both course and program levels, and serving as examiners and supervisors for undergraduate and postgraduate programs, including PhD students. Through a supervision course, both authors became interested in the concept of professionalism in supervision, leading them to explore its definition within the Swedish education system. A survey was conducted that look at the guidelines of eight Swedish universities for the term professionalism in connection to supervision. The results showed that most guidelines do only rudimentarily address the question of professionalism. Five common themes (i.e., supervisor competence, contact hours, ethical relationships, shared supervision, experience of the supervisor) could be identified as implicit indicators of professionalism (Jonsson & Román, 2016). To conclude this means that supervisors in Sweden

must develop an individual approach in their ambition to professionalise their practice, beyond the formal requirements or guidelines of their universities.

**Keywords: third-cycle education, individualisation, marketisation, supervisor, professionalism, Sweden**

Abstract: 249 words

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