

Governance of programmes for subject teachers

– an audit of Gävle University College, Linnaeus University and Stockholm University

Summary and recommendations

For pupils at school, it is important to have instruction from teachers who have undergone education of a high quality. For a number of years, criticism has been directed at education for subject teachers from a number of quarters. Challenges in the governance of these programmes is a possible explanation for problems being found difficult to rectify. The Swedish NAO has examined whether governance at Gävle University College, Linnaeus University and Stockholm University provides subject teacher programmes and supplementary teacher education with good conditions for development.

The audit shows that the efficiency of governance varies at the three higher education institutions. In order to help improve quality in subject teacher education and supplementary teacher education, they need, in various degrees, to clarify the division of responsibility, improve coordination and make use of student experience more extensively in their governance. Shortcomings in governance may be one of several explanations for the continuous criticism directed at these programmes.

Audit findings

Variation in the shortcomings of governance in subject teacher education

The three higher education institutions are differently equipped to govern subject teacher education and supplementary teacher education, but all of them have the scope for developing governance of their programmes.

- Gävle University College could develop its governance of subject teacher programmes and supplementary teacher education. This higher education institution's governance and its small, relatively cohesive programmes, however, largely create the conditions for enabling further development of these programmes.
- Linnaeus University could improve governance of the programmes it provides but has largely succeeded in building up good structures to enable these programmes to be developed, despite many students and subject specialisations.

- The size of Stockholm University and the organisational spread of its programmes entail challenges for governance at this higher education institution. The university is the higher education institution that has the greatest scope for development.

The division of responsibilities is sometimes unclear at the higher education institutions

At Gävle University College, responsibility for programme development is clearly linked to a Director of Studies. At Linnaeus University, the clear division of responsibility provides the conditions for important decisions to be made on programme development. Despite this, both higher education institutions could work to identify responsibilities more clearly. At Stockholm University, it is not clear where the function with overall responsibility for subject teacher education and supplementary teacher education lies. Instead responsibility is divided among many actors and in many cases, overlaps.

Coordination needs to be more efficient

Subject teacher education is complex and challenging to govern, and the more extensive the programmes, the more coordination that is required. This is the reason for the more widespread idea at Stockholm and Linnaeus Universities that it takes time to develop education for subject teachers, compared with Gävle University College. At Stockholm University, unclear and partially overlapping responsibility, combined with an extensive committee organisation leads to coordination becoming time-consuming and far too rarely being translated into measures that develop the programmes.

Coordination is also a matter of making use of skills that are important to the education. Gävle University College needs to develop collaboration between different actors in its governance of subject teacher programmes. The advantages of coordination would then need to be weighed against the costs of expanding the latter.

Better use could be made of students' views on the programmes

Students should be a key source of continuous information on the quality of the programmes. They can give comprehensive assessments of a programme, on, for example, where it is coherent and on the relation between different subjects. Student participation in development efforts varies however. Linnaeus University has made the greatest efforts to make use of student perspectives in the programmes.

Recommendations

To improve governance so that it helps to raise the standards of subject teacher programmes and supplementary teacher education more effectively, the Swedish NAO presents the following recommendations.

Recommendations to Gävle University College and Stockholm University

- Develop channels for taking students' experiences of programmes into account. Students must be brought more extensively into the development of programmes and these higher education institutions must therefore build up efficient channels for student influence.

Recommendations to Gävle University College

- Build up structures to further involve those responsible for subjects and the educational science core in the governance of subject teacher education and supplementary teacher programmes. The advantage of increased cooperation should be balanced against the increased costs. Cooperation should be focused on concrete development efforts to raise programme standards.
- Clarify the Academic Council's role in the governance of the programmes. Included in this is clarification of the Academic Council's relation to other actors, particularly the education and research boards.

Recommendations to Linnaeus University

- Ensure that there is a clear division of responsibility and clear committee channels for programmes for the education of subject teachers in all faculties and institutions that run these programmes. For example, functions that have responsibility for each subject are needed which could participate in the coordination of subject teacher education and supplementary teacher programmes.
- Ensure efficient communication channels between the Board of Teachers Education, the programme council, the Office for Teachers Education and all faculties and institutions running education programmes for subject teachers.

Recommendations to Stockholm University

Stockholm University needs to clarify the division of responsibility for programmes and increase the efficiency of coordination. More concretely, this entails the following:

- Identifying which function that is responsible for running overall programme development work for subject teacher and supplementary

teacher programmes. It also entails considering giving the programme councils a more prominent role and streamlining their work by:

- reducing the number of programme councils responsible for subject teacher and supplementary teacher programmes
 - strengthening the programme councils' relations with the teacher education committees
 - giving the programme councils greater responsibility for preparing educational plans.
- Clarifying in other respects the relations between programme councils, institutions responsible for programmes and teacher education committees.