
International Mappings of Nonprofit Management Education

An Analytical Framework and the Case of Sweden

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Previous efforts to map and compare nonprofit management education across countries have proved difficult due to methodological issues, conceptual developments, and empirical focus. Based in recent empirical research from Sweden, this article presents an analytical framework that focuses on credit- and non-credit-based education, syllabi content, and organization of programs and courses and therefore allows for comparisons and analysis of nonprofit management education across countries. This framework may also contribute to the discussion on the best place for nonprofit management education and provide insights into the relationship between national nonprofit sector contexts and nonprofit management education.

Keywords: *education, nonprofit, management, Sweden*

THE FAST GLOBAL EXPANSION of nonprofit organizations during the twentieth century (Boli and Thomas, 1999) has been accompanied, at least during the past two or three decades, by a simultaneous growth of nonprofit management education initiatives (see, for example, Mirabella, Gemelli, Malcolm, and Berger, 2007). This is especially true for the situation in the United States (see, for example, O'Neill, 2007). Today, there is also a growing

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body of research studying the emerging opportunities and challenges for this specific type of education (Dolch, Ernst, McClusky, Mirabella, and Sadow, 2007; Donnelly-Cox and McGee, 2007; Mirabella, 2007; Pospíšilová, 2012; Wilson and Larson, 2002). However, despite earlier efforts to conduct comparisons between national contexts (Mirabella and others, 2007; O'Neill and Fletcher, 1999), proper comparisons among countries around the world have proved difficult due to methodological issues, conceptual developments, and empirical focus.

A related topic addressed in this article is that the existing research on nonprofit management education focuses almost exclusively on credit-based programs organized by universities. There is almost no published research examining noncredit-based programs and courses outside the university setting (see Lee, 2002, for an exception), thus making the research field of nonprofit management education incomplete. Another somewhat related aspect is that large parts of the existing knowledge in this field reflect the situation in the United States, while other national contexts tend to be much less explored (for studies of the situation in two countries in Europe, see Donnelly-Cox and McGee, 2007; Pospíšilová, 2012).

This article starts with the important insight that more comparative and case-oriented research, based on similarities and differences found across sectorial, national, and regional contexts, needs to be conducted on nonprofit management education. The main purpose of this article is to propose an analytical framework for mapping, comparing, and analyzing nonprofit management education in different countries and regions around the world. Because the framework has been developed based on recent empirical research on nonprofit management education efforts in Sweden, the article first presents an overview of these findings before situating the current Swedish universe of nonprofit management education in its proper national nonprofit sector setting. We argue that this research and particular context together constitute an important empirical example of the reasons why it is necessary to start developing and promoting analytical models for studying and comparing nonprofit management education between countries. As part of presenting this analytical framework and to illustrate both its applicability and relevance, the article contains a section in which the Swedish and the U.S. cases on nonprofit management education are briefly compared and discussed. The comparison with the United States is motivated by the fact that large parts of the existing research on nonprofit management education are based on empirical material from the United States.

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Methodology and Concepts

Previous research (Mirabella and others, 2007) indicates that the academic environment in Sweden has comparatively little to offer

in nonprofit management education. However, given the distinctiveness of the nonprofit sector in Sweden (see, for example, Lundström and Wijkström, 1997), a starting point for the empirical research behind the present article was the assumption that there would be a fairly high degree of activity within the sector itself with respect to management education. Moreover, in Sweden the distinction between credit and noncredit is upheld by the state, because only state-accredited universities and university colleges can organize credit-based educational programs and courses. This implies that all other educational efforts, provided by nonprofit or other organizations, are by definition noncredit-based. This rather clear-cut distinction may come as a surprise to non-Swedish readers, since universities in most other countries belong to the nonprofit sector. In Sweden, however, the organization of the educational system differs in several aspects, one of them being the legal form of the majority of universities and university colleges. The majority of Sweden's universities and university colleges are legally defined not as nonprofit organizations (compare with Lundström and Wijkström, 1997) but rather as public authorities. The distinctiveness of the Swedish nonprofit sector is further developed in the following section on national nonprofit sector contexts.

In addition to credit-based education, our project also collected data on noncredit-based programs and courses carried out by organizations other than universities. Consequently, the data presented here were gathered along two dimensions—one based in the nonprofit sector itself and the other in the world of universities and university colleges.

The data regarding credit-based education stem mainly from about fifty interviews with study counselors representing Sweden's twelve universities and thirty-five university colleges as well as from browsing sessions on related Web pages. As the collection of data on noncredit-based education risked becoming insurmountable because of the projected large number of programs and courses, we had to approach the empirical material in a pragmatic manner and decided to use the International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO) classification (see, for example, Salamon and Anheier, 1996) to guide and structure the data collection. Using existing research and contacts with national umbrella organizations in each ICNPO subsector as starting points, data were primarily collected in discussions with the main providers of education and by browsing Web pages. It should be mentioned, however, that given the inherent nature of the data collection process, it could not be guaranteed that the empirical material represents a total mapping of the universe of noncredit-based nonprofit management education in Sweden. We believe, however, that the empirical material enables us to pursue the main purpose of the article. The dataset concerns programs and courses from 2010.

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This article adopts Salamon and Anheier's (1996) definition of nonprofit organizations, which implies that *nonprofit management* here is defined as issues related to organizing, managing, and leading nonprofit organizations. Similarly, *nonprofit management education* is understood as educational efforts on organizing, managing, and leading nonprofit organizations. Congruent with these definitions, nonprofit management education does, in the present study, not include leadership programs and courses targeting "personal development" but are instead more focused on issues and aspects at an organizational level.

Although the present definition of nonprofit management education may appear unambiguous in relation to the expected content of programs and courses—that is, they should address the organizing, managing, and leading dimensions of such an organization—it does not provide any guidance to what kind of knowledge related to organizing, managing, and leading should be offered in particular programs and courses. In other strands of research, the particularities of nonprofit organizations have been referred to as their distinctive character as organizations (see, for example, Anheier, 2005; Hall, 1992). The distinctiveness is to some degree also discussed in research on nonprofit management education by, for example, Mirabella and others (2007). Recognizing the importance of the distinctive character of nonprofit organizations, this article therefore includes a distinction between the kinds of knowledge that should be offered for general for-profit management knowledge and nonprofit-specific management knowledge.

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Nonprofit Management Education in Sweden

In the empirical review of credit-based nonprofit management education in Sweden, it was unexpected to find that not one single program or course at any of Sweden's universities and university colleges fully qualified as being specific to nonprofit management (compare, for example, with Meijs, Ten Hoorn, and Brudney, 2007, who studied what business schools teach about the nonprofit sector). Illustrating just how rare and sporadic nonprofit management research and education still seem to be in Sweden, a study counselor from one of the universities observed, "There was someone here who used to do research in that area [nonprofit management]. He also put up some sort of associated course, but that was at least ten years ago. Today—no, there is nothing. . . ."

Many of the study counselors found this lacuna of programs and courses related to nonprofit management peculiar. Some even appeared to add nuances to or smooth over this fact by, for example, assuring the interviewer that there definitely must be a lot of talk and discussions regarding nonprofit organizations in the general management programs and courses their university or university college offered.

In a few cases we were able to identify single courses or minor parts of programs that involved topics related to nonprofit management or that targeted specific organizational fields in the nonprofit sector, such as sports, unionism, or religion. One such example was a five-week course at Lund University designed specifically for people in management and leader positions in student organizations. Another example derived from the Centre for Educational Management and the Faculty of Educational Sciences at Uppsala University, where there was a two-year master program called Pedagogical Leadership that partly focused on management and leadership issues in relation to churches.

Only two of the programs identified in the empirical material—both were undergraduate-level programs in sports management at the Linné University and Gothenburg University—had syllabi with a slightly more pronounced focus on nonprofit management issues. However, using the program at the Linné University as an illustration, a closer examination of the reading lists revealed a mixture of theoretical perspectives relating to either general management or sports management, including, for example, Armstrong and Kotler's *Marketing: An Introduction* (2007) or texts from the more narrow and specific sports management literature, such as *Perspectives on Sports Management* (our translation) (Broberg, 2004).

Our survey of nonprofit management education developed and delivered outside of the university arena in 2010 showed that Sweden has a variety of noncredit-based programs and courses specifically developed for nonprofit organizations. The overall supply of noncredit-based programs and courses appeared to be particularly vital in areas where the Swedish nonprofit sector typically is strong, such as culture, recreation, education, and labor (compare with Lundström and Wijkström, 1997). Even though our survey was far from exhaustive, the total number of programs and courses included in the database exceeded 300. As an indicative illustration, among the 107 *folkhögskolor* (which translates approximately as “popular high schools”), more than 120 of approximately 3,000 programs offered in 2010 were related to management of nonprofit organizations and subsequently included in the empirical material. These programs spanned from one to three years and had names such as Value-Based Leadership, Social Entrepreneurship, and Project Management for Nonprofit Organizations.

The analysis of this part of the empirical material also revealed that various types of organizations provided these noncredit-based programs and courses. Even if the majority of these providers were based in the nonprofit sector, either in the form of umbrella or individual organizations, there were also, interestingly enough, a number of researchers from universities and university colleges—such as Stockholm University, Stockholm School of Economics, and

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Stockholm School of Theology—involving as teachers and program facilitators. One could also find a number of consultancies and for-profit companies providing nonprofit management education, including, for example, PricewaterhouseCoopers Sweden. One case even involved a public sector organization, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, as an organizer of programs and courses for nonprofit managers.

Moreover, whereas the bulk of the noncredit-based programs and courses in Sweden featured more general for-profit content, a few examples involved nonprofit-specific content. The survey revealed, for example, entire noncredit-based programs provided by nonprofit organizations that combined issues of general management and distinctive features of nonprofit organizations, albeit with a bias toward the former.

Two examples are mentioned here. One is the housing cooperative development nonprofit organization HSB, which offered a wide array of courses to its members. Most of these courses were tailored to the local housing cooperative and its board, focusing on typical issues such as budgeting processes and legal aspects but also on organizational specific issues related to, for example, the role of the board and the functions of the president and other board members. The other example, involving a more strategic focus, is the Fenix program organized by the umbrella organization IDEELL ARENA. Unlike some of the more traditional nonprofit management education programs and courses in the Swedish nonprofit sector, the Fenix program focused almost exclusively on issues related to the mission of nonprofit organizations and the strategic implications of such issues.

The Importance of Regional and National Nonprofit Sector Contexts

In order to better explain the variance between nonprofit management educations in different countries, we relate the earlier empirical presentation to its proper national nonprofit sector context. The origin of and contemporary forces shaping the current educational universe in Sweden, we argue, can be found in the Swedish nonprofit sector context. Relating the empirical findings to their national context also provides a platform for putting forth an analytical framework for mapping and comparing nonprofit management education efforts around the world.

Sweden, along with its Nordic neighbors, often emerges as an odd case in international comparisons when the topic of nonprofit sector is introduced. Previous misconceptions about the size, scope, and character of Swedish civil society have been addressed and corrected (Lundström and Wijkström, 1997), and it is now commonly understood that Sweden benefits from the simultaneous presence of a large

public sector as well as a vital nonprofit sector (Lundström and Wijkström, 1997; Micheletti, 1995; Trägårdh, 2007).

Moreover, the Swedish nonprofit sector is clearly marked by what often is referred to as a typical *folkrörelse* tradition (see, for example, Svedberg and Lundström, 2003), or a popular movement *marinade*, as others have called it (Hvenmark, 2008; Hvenmark and Wijkström, 2004; Olsson, Nordfeldt, Larsson, and Kendall, 2009). The term *folkrörelse* emerged in Sweden in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries alongside the surge of organizations with roots in social movements, such as the free church movement, the workers' movement, and the temperance movement (Heckscher, 1951; Johansson, 1980; Trägårdh, 2007). During the second half of the twentieth century, *folkrörelse* came to include many different types of organizations and movements in the nonprofit sector. Today, one can even say that *folkrörelse* represents a more general quality of the nonprofit sector and its organizations in Sweden (Lundström and Wijkström, 1997).

For a nonprofit organization to fit the ideal of *folkrörelse* it must generally be member based, democratically governed, and rooted in an ideological base (compare with Larsson, 2007). Organizations meeting this ideal are generally considered transparent, open to everyone who wants to join, and dominated by the idea that every member counts as an equal owner or principal entitled to participate in everything from concrete operations to the organization's overarching governance. Many of the institutionalized norms and values for how the nonprofit sector ought to be structured and organized in Sweden have emerged from this tradition (Svedberg and Lundström, 2003). Consequently, it is no overstatement to say that the *folkrörelse* tradition has had a deep impact on how most subfields of the Swedish nonprofit sector have developed, overshadowing alternative organizational forms such as foundations, older societies, or more recent organizational inventions (Lundström and Wijkström, 1997).

The nonprofit management educational universe in Sweden is also "marinated" in this tradition. For example, the rich supply of programs and courses in areas such as culture, recreation, education, and labor should come as no surprise considering the strong standing of *folkbildning* (which translates approximately as "popular education") in Sweden (see, for example, Larsson, 2001). Nonprofit organizations in Sweden have historically had a skeptical attitude toward the traditional pedagogy of the universities and have instead promoted the pedagogical practice entailed in *folkbildning* (von Essen and Åberg, 2009). As such, along with the tradition of *folkrörelse*, *folkbildning* also serves as a vital historical and political antecedent to the nonprofit sector in Sweden and could in part explain the lack of credit-based programs and courses outlined earlier. This interpretation could also help explain some of the

differences between, for example, the U.S.-related experiences and those of Sweden, as well as the experiences of other European countries (see, for example, Donnelly-Cox and McGee, 2007; Pospíšilová, 2012).

National and International Comparisons

In what way and how does the present mapping of the current universe of nonprofit management education in Sweden compare to empirical knowledge in other countries in general and in the United States in particular? In order to make a national comparison, the significant distinctions between credit- and noncredit-based education, and between nonprofit education and nonprofit *management* education, must be underscored. For example, a literature review of the state of research in Sweden with regard to nonprofit education revealed only two working reports on the topic of nonprofit education (Gärde, 2007; Gärde and Thorell, 2008). The findings from these reports have also been used as references in an international comparison (Mirabella and others, 2007). These reports identify a number of education programs and courses focusing on general nonprofit issues provided by several Swedish universities and university colleges in subject areas ranging from social work, community work, and health care to sustainable development and human rights. Included in these reports were programs in general social work and courses such as “Voluntary Organizations and Human Rights” and “Civil Society and Sustainable Development in the World.”

However, from a closer reading of these texts, it becomes clear that they include only credit-based programs and courses related to general nonprofit issues. Hence, the distinctions related to credits and nonprofit *management* have enabled us to identify and discuss the void of credit-based nonprofit management education in Sweden and its implication for the nonprofit sector. Moreover, in targeting noncredit-based education in Sweden, we have also been able to include and study the existing multitude of these kinds of nonprofit management education programs and courses.

When contrasting the empirical material from Sweden with that of the United States, several comments could be made. The main issue of interest, though, is more of a methodological character, but with far-reaching consequences for such a comparison, and regarding the previously mentioned fact that published mappings of U.S. nonprofit management education only encompass universities. In other words, whereas the present study applies a broader search perspective, including organizers outside of universities, published American reviews have not. Hence, a strict comparison of the state of nonprofit management education across the two countries would be potentially misleading.

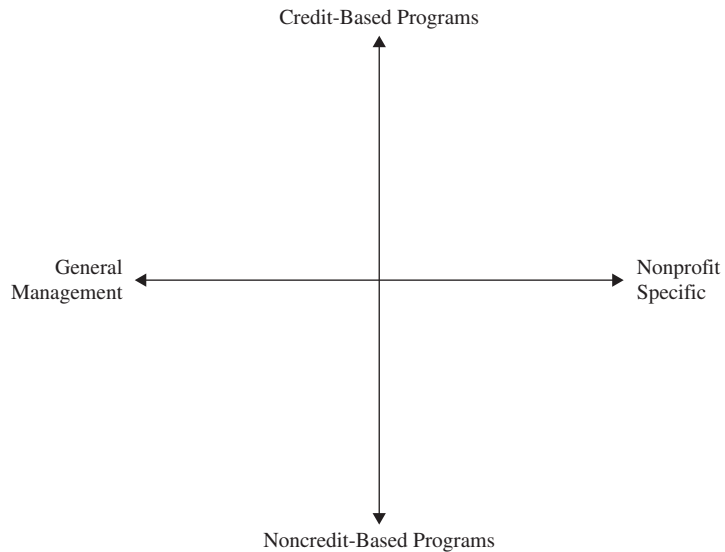
The other comparison that hypothetically could be made is with surveys of nonprofit management education efforts in different parts of the world (Mirabella and others, 2007; O'Neill and Fletcher, 1999). Yet again, as the existing international surveys only cover credit-based nonprofit management education organized by academic institutions, a far-reaching comparison is difficult to make. Of great interest, though, is the ambition found in one of the studies (Mirabella and others, 2007) to seek explanations as to why nonprofit management education across the world has a range of forms, according to different historical, institutional, and cultural contexts. According to the article, a yet-to-be-initiated line of research has the intent of expanding the analysis "to include all programs in the census, including those offered by universities outside their national borders and education and training programs provided by local, national, international, and hybrid NGO organizations" (Mirabella and others, 2007, p. 130).

An Analytical Framework for International Comparisons of Nonprofit Management Education Efforts

As argued previously, it is difficult to conduct proper comparisons across national and regional boundaries. The main reason for this is due to methodological aspects, here exemplified by the fact that the published mappings of the educational universe in the United States and many other countries and regions so far only encompass universities. Other reasons for the difficulties involved in comparing studies are conceptual developments and empirical focus. This article therefore proposes an analytical framework for how to categorize, analyze, compare, and discuss nonprofit management education. Although the analytical framework primarily draws on and attempts to synchronize the American and Swedish experiences along three dimensions, it could be applicable to other contexts as well.

The first dimension concerns program and course credits. At the two extremes of this dimension (vertical in the model, see Figure 1) are programs and courses offering either university credits or not. The second dimension in the model concerns program and course content and derives from our previous discussion on nonprofit distinctiveness in this research field (horizontal in the model; see Figure 1). One extreme on this dimension contains a more general approach to management, which here implies a perspective that all organizations are alike and that they therefore also comprise similar problems that require similar solutions. The other extreme of this horizontal dimension departs from the supposed distinctive features of the nonprofit sector and its organizations compared to organizations in other societal spheres.

Figure 1. Credits and Content

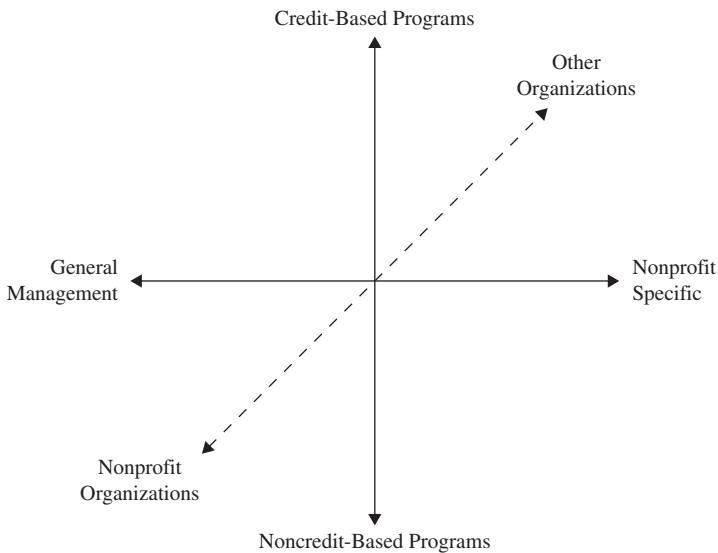


Applying this model to what published research says about nonprofit management education in the United States would probably imply a clustering of programs and courses toward the top of the model (compare with Mirabella and Wish, 2000). Within this cluster one would probably be able to find programs and courses in business administration faculties at the upper left corner (compare with Cornforth, Paton, and Batsleer, 1999; Young, 1999), and programs and courses in social work faculties in the upper right corner (see, for example, Young, 1988, 1999).

Applying the model to the case of Sweden, however, would probably produce a different pattern. Based on the empirical material presented in this article, most noncredit-based nonprofit management education is found at the bottom of the model, with a presumably even spread in relation to the content dimension. In addition to acknowledging the significance of noncredit-based education, the benefit of the framework, we would say, is that it also highlights the question of distinctiveness, or phrased differently, the nonprofit specific dimensions of organizing (for example, Anheier, 2005; Hall, 1992).

However, an important dimension stemming from the Swedish experience is neglected in this first attempt at an analytical framework. Because in order for the framework to reflect properly the situation in a country such as Sweden, it is here argued that the dimension of organizers would have to be added, which would make the framework

Figure 2. Credits, Content, and Organizers



three-dimensional (Figure 2). The third dimension concerns the types of organizations involved in arranging and providing programs and courses. The two proposed extremes of this dimension are either nonprofit organizations or other organizations, such as corporations or public authorities. Previously published research considers only academic and credit-based programs and courses, whereas the review of the current universe in Sweden reveals a plethora of organizers, including mainly nonprofit organizations but also public authorities and corporations. A global review of nonprofit management education would need to consider the nature of the organizer as well, particularly if nonprofit specific dimensions are deemed relevant.

Applying this framework fully to any of the two countries specifically considered in this article requires more information than is currently available, as well as a much more comprehensive analysis. However, it is not far-fetched to assume that the American experience, through such an analysis, would be pushed further into the upper regions of the framework, toward the category of “other organizations,” while the Swedish case probably would diffuse even more into the framework’s lower regions.

In summary, the analytical framework allows for the inclusion and comparison of different national nonprofit sector contexts through the introduction of open-ended dimensions and added complexity. As a result, eight distinguishable categories or positions are conceivable in this framework, all of which could be used for further research on and

comparisons of nonprofit management education in different countries and contexts.

Discussion

When interpreting differences across countries regarding nonprofit management education, most scholars would probably ask why Sweden deviates from the situation in the United States and many other places. Posing the question in such a fashion automatically positions the United States as the main reference point, which perhaps would not come as a surprise—especially since the nonprofit concept itself was invented there (compare with Anheier, 2005; Hall, 1992) and the majority of research on nonprofit management educations has been conducted there. Still, such an approach runs the risk of turning all other countries into deviating cases in relation to the main reference point. Although this article focuses on the particularities of the somewhat narrow case of Sweden and thereby cements the status of the U.S. situation as the “standard,” it is interesting to reflect upon the productivity of turning that question on its head. That is, instead of asking how Sweden differs, one can ask why and in what way the United States differs.

By asking the question in such a fashion and within the context of nonprofit management education, one possible answer about differences may be found in the legal frames for nonprofit organizations in the United States. It could, for example, be assumed that the pattern of the U.S. educational universe is partly an outcome of a more developed and demanding judicial system. Students and nonprofit managers would therefore be required to learn and master such aspects in a formal way in order to be eligible as managers. For example, in the United States the master's degree is often regarded as a minimum requirement for obtaining a management position in the nonprofit sector. In Sweden, the legal framework concerning the majority of nonprofit organizations is almost nonexistent (Lundström and Wijkström, 1997), which makes it less important, not to say pointless, for students and nonprofit managers to formally study and acquire this kind of knowledge.

In her comprehensive study of the transformation of the U.S. nonprofit sector during the twentieth century, Skocpol (2003) paints a picture in which this societal sphere, before the 1960s, was dominated by large, membership-based, and democratically governed associations. This longstanding view of the United States as a “nation of joiners” could be traced back to the works of, among others, Tocqueville (2000, published originally in 1835) and has been described by various scholars ever since (see, for example, Schlesinger's well-cited “Biography of a Nation of Joiners” from 1944). Yet, as Skocpol (2003) points out, the 1960s brought with it societal changes that transformed the nonprofit sector in the United States into a sphere

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heavily influenced by, for example, professionalized nonprofit organizations, corporate and managerial ethos and practices, and customer-like relations between nonprofit organizations and citizens. This development became so all-embracing in the 1980s that it began to have an impact on the educational system, which implied the establishment of more and more credit-based nonprofit management education programs and courses (Skocpol, 2003).

According to the empirical results presented in this article, this has apparently not occurred in Sweden—yet. With a reference to Tocqueville's classical perspective on the United States, Sweden can still largely be characterized as a nation of joiners (compare with, for example, Svedberg and Lundström, 2003). However, with reference to contemporary developments in the Swedish society in general (Jacobsson, Laegreid, and Pedersen, 2004) and in the nonprofit sector in particular (Hvenmark, 2010; Trägårdh, 2007; Wijkström and Einarsson, 2006), it may not be far-fetched to assume that a new survey among Swedish universities and university colleges in a few years' time may result in a completely different picture. Or, could it instead be assumed, as has been hinted at, that since both the nonprofit context and nonprofit management education in Sweden differ to such an extent, a distinctive development is viable? This is an interesting issue because it implies that, even if the Swedish nonprofit sector currently appears to be in a somewhat similar situation as its U.S. counterpart before the 1960s, it might not follow a similar path forward due to its specific antecedents and the contemporary character of the institutional environment in which it is embedded.

Before concluding, we explicitly discuss the potentially predictive value of the proposed analytical framework. That is, are there cultural factors that might predict where various forms of nonprofit management education are delivered? Based in the framework and our empirical material, we propose that the combination of a set of factors might provide a fertile institutional environment for the development of credit-based nonprofit management education in any given country. These factors may include, but not be exclusive to, a large nonprofit sector, nonprofit-specific research and researchers, national arenas and policies on nonprofit issues, legal frames pertaining to nonprofit organizations, a high degree of professionalization and university degree requirements in nonprofit organizations, corporate and managerial ethos and practices, customer-like relations between nonprofit organizations and members, and focus on service rather than voice functions among nonprofit organizations. If several or all of these factors exist in a particular national nonprofit context, one would expect the development of credit-based education, if not already in place, to be a priority among policymakers and practitioners.

We have chosen not to discuss the predictive value of the framework in relation to noncredit-based education. The reason for this

is simply that we believe that noncredit-based education exists in most countries with a vibrant nonprofit sector, although this hypothesis has yet to be tested and analyzed.

Conclusion

This article has highlighted the pressing need for more international, comparative, and case-oriented research with respect to nonprofit management education, based in the similarities and differences across nonprofit sector contexts. It is through such efforts that we will gain a deeper understanding of everything from syllabi content, academic affiliation, and demographic composition of participants to issues such as existence, impact, and design of programs and courses offered outside the world of universities. Ultimately, we argue that such efforts will also contribute to and perhaps enlarge the discussion on the best place for nonprofit management education (Mirabella and Wish, 2000) to include programs and courses found outside of universities and discussions on the importance of a nonprofit-specific syllabi, in addition to providing much-needed insights into the relationship between national and regional nonprofit sector contexts and this particular type of education.

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