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RESEARCH ON MANAGERIAL TASKS: CONDITIONS, WAY OF WORKING AND RESULTS

Presentation of the projects

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Research on Managerial Tasks: Conditions, Ways of Working and Results

Presentation of the projects

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Managerial tasks: Conditions, Ways of working and Results

VINNOVA's commitments in the field of work life development aim to create sustainable development in business and public sectors by enlightening the importance of human factors as a creative resource. Focus is on the organisation of work, and on management and leadership issues that increase the ability to develop a long-term sustainable working life. The goal is global competitiveness.

"Managerial tasks - conditions, ways of working and results" is the second call in the program "*The workplace as an innovation system*" The call focusing on the importance of the managerial function for the efficiency and sustainable development of operations in business and public sector. The aim is to enlighten, develop and renew how management is organised and carried out at various workplaces in Sweden. Taking the Swedish management tradition as a point of departure the idea is to develop knowledge, understanding and practice.

Eleven projects

The call received 54 applications on research and development projects. The project proposals have been reviewed by a committee of researchers and representatives from industry as well from society/policy. Eleven projects are being funded within the budget of 5 M€and run between 2008 and 2012. The granted projects cover service operations, industrial work, and knowledge intensive businesses and public organisations.

The projects focus on issues such as organisational conditions of managerial performance, strategic alliances and networks at work places involved in collaborative systems. Some projects concern the managerial work within organizations that are implementing concepts such as Lean production in health care and New Public management in schools. Additionally, projects target gendered conditions for management, leadership activities in terms of social interaction as well as a global perspective on the Swedish management model.

In this brochure the eleven funded projects are shortly described.

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A global perspective on the Swedish management model, conditions and challenges

Project leader: Anders Wigerfelt, Malmö University

Background and problem description

The research project's point of departure is the importance of leadership for the organisation and function of the workplace and for operational efficiency in a global perspective.

Aims and objectives

With IKEA in China as case study, the overall aim of the project is to study different aspects of the Swedish management model and how it is expressed in a global context. Through different substudies, the objective is to contribute to an increased understanding of the Swedish leadership tradition and its opportunities and challenges in a global perspective.

Impact and results

Studying IKEAs Swedish leadership and the implications of this management tradition for the foreign investments of companies with strong values is likely to lead to results that are of general interest for Swedish companies as a whole. The projects focus on IKEAs investments in China, a significant market for Swedish export firms, will specifically highlight problems relating to diversity and cultural competence. In this context, the effects of the projects results are anticipated as being managers increased awareness of and ability to deal with inequalities and inconsistencies arising in the organisations and managers being better able to take advantage of the development opportunities available to a diversity-based organisation. Another important result is that ideas that implicitly form the basis of management recruitment and perceptions of competence and staff collaboration that contribute to both inclusion and exclusion in management recruitment processes are made visible.

Implementation of plan and methodology

Five sub-projects will be conducted with a focus on management recruitment, management training programs and the importance of management organisation for a company's efficiency. Other areas of study include the importance of how managers organise their work, management training, and diversity issues associated with management. Both qualitative (observations and interviews) and quantitative methods (questionnaires) will be used in this multidisciplinary study.

Partners

The IKEA-Group

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Management in Sweden: An issue about relations and responsibility

Project leader: Stefan Tengblad, University of Borås

Background and problem description

The working life of Sweden and Scandinavia has some general characteristics that are important to highlight and to measure its impact. Of special interest in this research project is the specificity of the leader – employee role (the latter normally referred to as co-workers). It is often the case that the co-workers are responsible for planning and execution of own work, while the role of the closest managers is more oriented towards administrative responsibilities such budgeting, reporting and Human resource management. In short we want to develop a Scandinavian version of the Leader-Member-Exchange Theory (LMX) and a refined empirical instrument which incorporate the specificities of the leader – employee role and to investigate the relation between LMX, innovativity and work satisfaction.

Aims and objectives

In this research project, managing and co-workership is analysed in terms of relations, exchanges and responsibilities and in relation to innovativity. Our focus is on the relations between managers – co-workers and the social exchange, for example services, appreciation, respect, trust and responsibility. The objective is an empirically based model and an instrument to measure this in a Scandinavian context.

Impact and results

The theoretical contribution consists of: a) a development of the LMX theory and LMX-scales to include a co-workership perspective, b) to insert a stronger emphasis on responsibility in LMX theory/-scales, c) to adapt LMX theory/ -scales to the Scandinavian model of management/leadership.

Implementation of plan and methodology

The project is conducted in five studies: systematic literature review, development of a new instrument for LMX, psychometric testing of the new instrument, application of the new instrument among Swedish and foreign work groups at Volvo, the application of the new instrument in another sector than manufacturing.

Partners

AB Volvo and Netsurvey Bolinder AB.

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Coordinating Management – leadership and managerial work in a distributed and resource restricted organization

Project leader: Henrik Kock, Linköping University

Background and problem description

The project is based on mutual knowledge interests between both researchers and practitioners concerning the coordination of leadership in a fast growing company. The studied company has recently established production in several sites in Sweden as well as in Poland and China. Since the studied company also can be characterized as having a resource restricted and distributed organization, issues concerning the need to coordinate the leadership of the company have been considered. The theoretical understanding of leadership as coordination is primarily understood from two perspectives: coordination as informal communication processes and coordination as collective learning processes.

Aims and objectives

The study is based on studies of a growing and geographically expanding company, and the purpose is to describe, analyse and discuss conditions for improved coordination of the company, and how processes of coordination among managers can be understood as collective learning processes.

Impact and results

The project will contribute to an increased understanding regarding the coordination of leadership, understood as a form of a collective learning process. Results from the project is also planned to act as an important input regarding efforts to develop the leadership within the company.

Implementation of plan and methodology

Based on a multidisciplinary and interactive research approach, three substudies will be accomplished: (1) Mapping the terrain, regarding conditions that facilitate or constrain coordination and collective learning among leaders (2) Joint analysis and development seminars with the management, based on a number of thematic issues; (3) Evaluation and change over time, with a focus on interpreting and understanding possible changes of the managers' ability concerning issues of coordination and collective learning.

Partners

Linköping University and Rimaster Inc.

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Leadership and collaboration in strategic alliances and networks

Project leader: Agneta Planander, Lund University

Background and problem description

Strategic alliances and networks as collaborative organizational forms constitute a more complex context in comparison with more traditional hierarchal ones - for the management involved as well as for the employees and implies quite different operational and organisational conditions to be aware of at the strategic and operational level. Actors with different backgrounds, interests, goals and values should coordinate their intentions and actions with shared goals and for mutual benefits. Besides the fact that a strategic alliance/network often is temporary, it also involves a great amount of insecurity, risks and contradictory messages and situations. The prerequisites for the leadership/managerial role and its consequences on managerial practices are central, but neglected aspects in the understanding of strategic alliances.

Aims and objectives

The aim with the project "Leadership and collaboration in strategic alliances and networks" is to enrich the understandings of strategic collaborative processes between firms and organisations, focussing on how the prerequisites and content of leadership/management is changed when collaborating in inter-organisational relationships. Expectations on the manager's role and consequences for the everyday work of managers are discussed, as well as the content, conditions and relations in managerial work. The ambition is to explore, analyze and problematize these topics at different organizational levels.

Impact and results

While the amount of strategic collaborations and networks is continually growing, in private businesses as well as in public sector, it is important to deepen the knowledge, practical as well as theoretical, concerning the prerequisites and consequences for the management of these collaborations between organizations. The project has both practical and theoretical implications. The aim is to develop the theoretical field and distribute the conclusions and recommendations to the academy as well as firms and organizations, valuable in their planning and implementation of interorganizational collaborations.

Implementation of plan and methodology

Two case studies, including observations and in-depth interviews at different organisational levels, will be conducted during 2009. Compilations of empirical findings, analysis/ comparisons, interpretations and report of results will take place during 2010. The study is conducted from a social constructivist/interpretive perspective.

Partners

The project will be conducted in cooperation with two or three organizations involved in business alliances and networks.

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Reference group:

Ann Mari Sellerberg, Lund University; Lars Strannegård, Handelshögskolan i Stockholm; Stefan Tengblad, Borås Högskola

Organizing knowledge intensive work The role of managerial leadership

Project leader: Ingalill Holmberg, Stockholm School of Economics

Background and problem description

The point of departure for this project is Knowledge Society and the notion of a new working life with poorly defined work content. These aspects shape work places into being collaborative systems with projects and networking as primary modes of everyday work, most often highly unpredictable in nature.

Aims and objectives

Our main focus is the implications of these new conditions in terms of efficient and value-creating cooperation between managers and co-workers.

An important premise is that a substantial part of research on managerial work and leadership is based on assumptions no longer valid.

Impact and results

The expected outcome is twofold; firstly, new perspectives on managerial work and leadership, and secondly, changes in modes of work and ways of organizing in the partner organizations.

Implementation of plan and methodology

The methodology is based on case-studies with a longitudinal perspective. Collaborative partners are; Pfizer AB (Sweden), Apoteket AB, IFL (Institutet för företagsledning), Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting.

Partners

Collaborative partners are; Pfizer AB (Sweden), Apoteket AB, IFL (Institutet för företagsledning), Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting.

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Gendered conditions for management

Project leader: Anna Wahl, KTH - Royal Institute of Technology

Background and problem description

Sweden is often seen as a country with traditions in working for gender equality in work organizations. There is therefore an interest in knowing more about work for change in theory and practice based on empirical research in Swedish organizational life. There are also many challenges for Swedish organizations when working with gender equality issues in international and transnational contexts that can be further explored in research.

Aims and objectives

The purpose is to study the gendered conditions for management and the efforts to change these conditions. The aim is to contribute to the renewal of business activities, improve working conditions and create breeding ground for innovations. Two aspects are in focus: the different conditions for men and women as managers and manager's accountability in diversity work, and motives when working for gender equality.

Impact and results

The project aims at developing and disseminating knowledge within the research field of gender, organization and management. Results will also contribute to increased competence about the relation between management and gender equality issues among managers and employees at Sandvik and to partners in the network. A written report about the project addressed to Sandvik will be published, and results in the report will be discussed at several workshops in the organization.

There is a special focus in the project on developing management training and assessment in relation to gender equality that will be disseminated through workshops and books.

Results will be analyzed in comparison with other empirical studies in the Fosfor* group, and be published. Management in differing contexts is analyzed in a Swedish publication. The other book will be published in English, presenting research and work for change in a Swedish context related to international studies.

Tools, material and methods for the dissemination of knowledge on management and gender will be developed, with a special focus on integrating gender perspective in management training.

Implementation of plan and methodology

The project comprises three phases. Phase 1 consists of an empirical study of preconditions, forms and results of management and co-workership at Sandvik. During Phase 2, results from Phase 1will be analyzed in relation to results from other studies and published in two books. Tools, material and methods for the dissemination of knowledge on management and gender will be developed during Phase 3.

Partners

The research project consists of cooperation between the research group Fosfor at KTH (Royal Institute of Technology), and Sandvik AB.

Studentlitteratur will publish the English book. A network of persons responsible for gender equality and diversity issues in AB Volvo, Skanska, Vattenfall och Sandvik is connected to the project. The network meets on a regular basis and will contribute as a reference group in the development of methods in management training.

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Doing leadership: Leadership as social interaction processes

Project leaders: Monica Lindgren and Johann Packendorff, KTH - Royal Institute of Technology

Background and problem description

Both in research and practice, the perspective on leadership as an interaction between individuals in gaining increased attention. This perspective implies that leadership activities are co-constructed by two or more persons together, rather by the formal manager alone. While interactive perspectives has been part of the theoretical debate within leadership research for some time, the basic assumption that the leader is a single person and that leadership is therefore executed by a single person is rarely articulated and challenged. Unitary command has been treated as a 'natural' thing and as a moral virtue. Against this, there is an emerging stream of research emphasising leadership as a relational phenomenon, thereby aiming at new post-heroic leadership ideals and the reconstruction of traditional masculinities and femininities in the leadership field.

From a practical perspective, there are several advantages of shared and distributed leadership forms. Advantages are identifies on an individual level (improved work-life balance, better conditions for competence development) as well as on a societal level (increased democracy, minority involvement in managerial work, increased legitimacy for managers and management). Most advantages are, however, to be found on a relational level, i.e. the consequences for organizational interactions. Involving many individuals in leadership work implies an increased use of the total managerial competence, decreased operational vulnerability and risk, and increased representativity. Still, there is a urgent need for knowledge development in this sub-field within leadership research, as the international literature is fragmented and only partly based on in-depth empirical research. Scandinavian research is in the forefront of this development, and should have the potential to provide the international research community with both theoretical and conceptual developments and with empirical examples.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the project is to develop a theoretical perspective where leadership activities are seen in terms of social interaction. This also implies a gender perspective as traditional leadership theories are usually contributing to the reproduction of taken-for-granted masculine norms in work life. By this, the project aims at the needs of contemporary organizations to develop new forms for leadership - such as collaborative, dispersed and shared leadership forms. The intention is that the project shall contribute to a theoretical movement where leadership is increasingly seen as a collective, relational phenomenon.

Impact and results

The general theoretical and practical point of the departure in the project is thus to apply a perspective on the work of leaders implying that leadership is constructed in social interaction. From this, the following basic assumptions are formulated:

- leadership is studied as activities between people, i.e. interactions between formal managers and other involved actors
- human beings are seen as actors constructing these activities based on socially constructed preconceptions
- in the environment of all organizational members, we find preconceptions stating what leadership is and should be, conceptions that are brought into all interactions in the form of leadership ideals and gendered notions on how men and women should behave
- focus is moved from leaders as individuals to leadership as activity processes in organizations

The intended results of the project are thus to develop theoretical models and empirical patterns/categories related to the parts of leadership theory emphasising constructionist and relational perspectives. The project is also in its entirety founded in a gender perspective on leadership, where collective leadership activities are analysed in terms of processes of masculinisation and feminisation.

Apart from the ongoing feedback to the involved organisations, the results from the project will be spread through conferences with practitioners and through a book on development of collective leadership practices.

Implementation of plan and methodology

The project is implemented as a theoretical development process in parallel to the ongoing empirical case studies of leadership processes in organizations. Leadership processes in established industrial firms will be studied along with project-based organisations and entrepreneurial start-ups. We intend to move forward with three ongoing case studies, and in addition at least two organisations will be subject to processual studies; yet another entrepreneurial start-up and also a project or project-based firm. Each case study commence with a general analysis of the organisational environment in terms of operations and background, and the involved actors are interviewed individually and together. Thereafter, the handling of a number of critical strategic issues are followed through repeated visits and/or participant observation. The processes are described in terms of involved actors, organisational and social roles, forms for work organisation, and experienced outcomes/effects.

Partners

This is a critical research project without co-financing bodies. Collaborations with international and national research groups will take place, including some of the other grant holders in the programme.

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The Lean Philosophy and Managerial Work in Healthcare: prerequisites, forms and processes

Project leader: Bozena Poksinska, Linköping University

Background and problem description

Despite many success stories the Lean philosophy has not been easily transferred and many attempts to implement Lean ended in disappointing outcomes. Many experts in the area state that the key to the successful application of Lean is to recognize that it requires a change in the "culture" of an organization. Lean leadership is the necessary condition to achieve real Lean transformation. Lean requires an almost completely different approach in day-to-day and hour-to-hour management, a change in the way the organization acts, interacts, communicates and makes decisions.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the project is:

- to develop knowledge about the prerequisites, forms, methods and processes for establishing and leading a Lean Management System in healthcare organisations
- to contribute to a better understanding of the principles and behaviours of Lean leadership for creating and supporting a Lean Management System.

Impact and results

The project aims to develop a solid knowledge base and a practical framework for how to establish and lead a Lean Management System in healthcare organisations. This knowledge is aimed to be utilized for starting new and supporting existing Lean initiatives in Swedish healthcare organisations. In the longer term the project has the potential to positively influence the quality of care, improve access and reduce waiting times.

Implementation of plan and methodology

The project is interactive and is planned to be performed with cooperation of leaders from 6-8 county councils, healthcare organisations working with Lean and Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL).

Partners

The project will be performed in cooperation and financial support from The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL).

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New Public Management in practice. Preconditions for municipal managerial work

Project leader Elizabeth Neu Morén, IPF, Uppsala University

Background and problem description

Empirical studies of managers have shown that managerial work is characterized by a high level of social interaction. Managerial work is often conducted face-to-face, and managers often perceive a need to react to the situations, problems, and requirements of others. The necessity to act more as a problem solver than as a leader also pressures the manager to engage in short-term, interrupted, and fragmented activities rather than long-term, planned activities. Thus, managers often feel constrained and experience a severe lack of control. Taking the above empirical studies of managerial work as a starting point, the overall purpose with this study is to examine and further illuminate the prerequisites and results of managerial work in practise.

Aims and objectives

Compared to research on the subject of leadership, the formal position manager has enjoyed far less attention. When managerial work occasionally has been studied, the focus has mostly been on managers in private owned companies. The knowledge of managers and their work in the public sector is thus very limited. The purpose with this project is to contribute to this field of knowledge by studying municipal middle managers. The aim is to describe the organizational working conditions that these managers face, and to examine how their work in practice is influenced by the market oriented reforms, known as New Public Management, that has been implemented in the public sector during the last two decades.

Impact and results

The study will be conducted through three phases. The first phase includes interviews with key actors in the participating organizations. During this phase the specific focus and limitations of the study will be decided. During the second phase the main data collection will take place through interviews with municipal middle managers. A survey will also be distributed among a larger number of managers. During the third and last phase, a workshop will be held where results of the study will be presented and discussed.

Partners

City of Stockholm, Education Department Municipality of Uppsala, Care and Education

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Boundary-spanning Management

Project leader: Jan E Persson, Lund University

Background and problem description

In the service sector, there is a growing dependency upon work across internal and external organisational boundaries in order to be able to create services that match the customer's requirements and wishes. The ability of leadership to ensure opportunities for coordination is thus something that really is of key importance.

Aims and objectives

In this project, we investigate how the increased need for boundaryspanning work affects leadership in the form of changed demands on how the role of leader is practiced and how operations are structured and managed.

Impact and results

The results of the project are increased knowledge of boundary spanning leadership in practice and how such leadership can be developed and aspired to. Previous research has not dealt with the conditions and forms of boundary-spanning leadership to any great extent.

Implementation of plan and methodology

Within the framework of the project, managers from different levels and functions take part. On the managerial level there are a number of line managers (top management) and operational managers (middle management). The administrative and financial function is led by a financial manager. These managers will meet at work meetings and experience seminars on their own managerial level and between levels in order to build structures in the form of boundary-spanning management teams, steering groups, and support functions which reinforce and stimulate the boundaryspanning work occurring between staff (floor management).

Work meetings with managers at which problems and opportunities are discussed will periodically be conducted in order to support progress in this work. These work meetings have the primary purpose of supporting the concrete work of developing forms of reinforcing and stimulating the boundary-spanning work that is underway and under development within the organisations. The researchers role is to act as a sounding board, offer process support, and, in some cases, come up with ideas or present theoretical frames of reference.

Partners

Town Council Limahamn Bunkeflo, Malmö

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Organizational prerequisites for management: Healthy jobs and efficient operations in public sector

Project leader: Annika Härenstam, University of Gothenburg

Background and problem description

New methods for the control of public organizations, customer care, and requirements for increased productivity involve great challenges, not least for line managers. These line managers need to deal with productivity, quality and cost guidelines within the organization without negatively affecting their own and their employees' health. They are expected to balance expectations and requirements from both politicians and from strategic and administrative levels, as well as from colleagues within the organizations, members of the public and members of their own profession. Many districts have problems to recruit managers. Several studies show a deterioration of the work environment and health within welfare organizations has taken place during the past fifteen years, especially for top line managers and women in professional posts. Earlier research shows that organizations which are male dominated differ in the resources available to them, compared to female dominated organizations. Male and female dominated organizations also differ in their way of dealing with change. This indicates that a gender perspective is most important when considering future projects. It is well known that employment conditions and benefits for managers in the public sector differ from those in the private sector. This is therefore not due to personal differences between the individual managers themselves. The question is: what form should an organization take in order to create good working conditions for managers?

Aims and objectives

The aim of the project is to study managerial and organizational development to enhance knowledge for making public sector services more innovative. The first objective is to study the organizational conditions of managerial performance and innovative capabilities, in relation to work environment and organizational effectiveness. The second objective is to develop strategies to improve manager's institutional performance. A third objective is to develop co operations with the surrounding society to facilitate knowledge dissemination and development also after the project period.

Impact and results

We expect that involved local authorities develop in a positive direction by improved conditions for management and sustainable organisational structures for communication between organisational levels. Both efficiency, work environment and stress among managers are measured. Process and effect evaluations are performed. The conclusions will be used to design managerial training programs and public sector development. The project is based on co-operation between researchers, organizations and strategic actors to improve the knowledge produced.

Implementation of plan and methodology

Five local government organizations are studied through a researcher guided interventions model, self evaluation and support from researchers during these processes. About 25 other services will function as a reference group. In both groups (about 500 managers in 30 organizations), data on managerial demand, support, stress, as well as organizational effectiveness, innovation and work environment is collected before and after the intervention.

Partners

Region Västra Götaland, Institute of Stress Medicine, Previa, City of Göteborg, Municipality of Borås, District Center the Social Unit, Municipality of Ale, Municipality of Alingsås

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April 2009

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VINNOVA Analysis VA 2009:

- 01 Svenska tekniker 1620 1920
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- 04 Swedish possibilities within Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine
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- 11 Sammanfattning Effekter av statligt stöd till fordonsforskning. Brief version of VA 2009:02, for brief version in English see VA 2009:12
- 12 Summary Impact of Government Support to Automotive Research. Brief version in English of VA 2009:02, for brief version in Swedish see VA 2009:11
- 13 Singapore Aiming to create the Biopolis of Asia

VA 2008:

- 01 VINNOVAs Focus on Impact A Joint Approach for Impact Logic Assessment, Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Analysis
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- 03 Nanotechnology in Sweden an Innovation System Approach to an Emerging Area. For Swedish version see VA 2007:01
- 04 The GSM Story Effects of Research on Swedish Mobile Telephone Developments. For brief version in Swedish or English see VA 2008:07 or VA 2008:06

- 05 Effektanalys av "offentlig såddfinansiering" 1994 - 2004
- 06 Summary The GSM Story Effects of Research on Swedish Mobile Telephone Developments. *Brief version* of VA 2008:04, for brief version in Swedeish see VA 2008:07.
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- 08 Statlig och offentlig FoU-finansiering i Norden
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- 10 National and regional cluster profiles

 Companies in biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and medical technology in Denmark in comparison with Sweden
- 11 Impacts of the Framework Programme in Sweden
- 12 A benchmarking study of the Swedish and British life science innovation systems. Comparison of policies and funding. *Only available as PDF*
- Looking over the Shoulders of Giants

 A study of the geography of big pharma R&D and manufacturing operations. Only available as PDF
- 14 Utvärdering av MERA-programmet

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- 03 Research on the managerial tasks: condition, ways of working and results.

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VERKET FÖR INNOVATIONSSYSTEM - SWEDISH GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY FOR INNOVATION SYSTEMS

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