

Abstract

Title: Profession, Science and State – Psychology in Sweden 1968-1990

Written in English, summary in English, 352 pages

Author: E. M. Rigné

Doctoral dissertation at the Department of Sociology,

Göteborg University

Box 720, SE-405 30 GÖTEBORG, Sweden

ISBN 91-974106-4-0

ISSN 1650-4313

This dissertation consists of a case study of Swedish psychology during a specific period of time. It focuses psychology as a scientific discipline, as a professionalised occupation and as a cognitive resource for policy-making. From a general science studies perspective, it aims to provide a sociological and historical analysis of the development of psychological research, psychological practice and psychology's relation to social policy-making in key areas of the welfare state in general. The case study utilises discourse analysis, analysis of archival and documentary material, interviews and bibliometric analyses. It is argued that psychologists have changed their image from being primarily academics to being clinical practitioners whose expertise has moved from differential diagnostics to psychotherapy. Professional discourse has evolved similarly to that shown to be the case in other countries, drawing extensively on rhetorics of economics, humanitarianism and facilitation and control. A critical assessment of discourse analysis and constructionism is provided, arguing for a restricted application of constructionism in science studies. Further, professional action and organisation is analysed. It is argued that the professional project pursued by psychologists is characterised by power struggles within the profession, and is an outcome of adaptation to institutional demands stemming from the labour-market. It results in a pattern of professionalisation which deviates from what is hypothesised by much professionalisation theory. Psychology's role as a cognitive resource for social policy-making is analysed in relation to claims to decisive influence made by psychologists. It is argued that psychological knowledge has played a negligible role in key areas of policy-making. The case illustrates the politicisation of science rather than the scientization of policy-making. Finally, psychology's development as a discipline is analysed. It is argued that the changes in the system of research and higher education illustrates the increasing influence of non-cognitive factors on disciplinary development. It has provided academic psychology with potential for growth but at the same time weakened its disciplinary core. Academic psychology has been more theoretically and methodologically diverse than is usually claimed, but a rivaling knowledge ideal to the traditional academic one has been introduced by sectorial research policy.

Keywords: sociology of science, profession, history of psychology, discourse analysis, social policy, higher education