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Schenk, Anett

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LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

Compensatory Legitimation and Intermediate Bodies – The Example of Social Democratic Policies of Higher Education –

Anett Schenk
Lund University, Department of Sociology, Box 114
22100 Lund
Sweden
anett.schenk@soc.lu.se

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Abstract

The state's need for legitimacy and the legitimation crisis of the capitalist state have been discussed in social theory since a long time. However, it has also been discussed whether not legitimation but general support would be the decisive factor and whether legitimation could be substituted for by something else.

This article considers the policies of higher education supported by Social Democratic governments in Sweden and in Germany, specifically in North-Rhine Westphalia in the latter case, from the mid-1960s to the year 2000. It pinpoints various shifts in policy orientation during the last thirty years. One shift is discussed in particular detail, namely the shift from addressing issues of class to addressing those of gender segregation. A discussion of this shift in terms of "compensatory legitimation" and the "utilisation of expertise" (Hans N. Weiler 1983, 1990) allows an interpretation of a more general nature applicable as well to political governments others than Social Democratic ones.