

## **A NEW SYSTEM OF SWEDISH TEACHER EDUCATION – AGAIN AND AGAIN**

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### **Diversity, individual responsibility, decentralisation and co-operation. And heritage.**

I finished school at the classical gymnasium in 1962. Some of the teachers whom I have met there had completed their professional education some 30-40 years before, which means that their teachers and university professors had their roots deep down in the 19th century. My students will - I hope - keep teaching and lecturing until the middle of this century. I often think about the long lines of values and knowledge in every national educational system, even if we try to change organisation, curriculum, mantras, terminology, methods, focus. Even if we borrow ideas and systems and grading systems from each other in our internationalised world.

Today, the keywords in the Swedish educational learning-focussed debate on all levels are: learning society/organisation, mentor/tutoring, life-long education, didactics, learning environment, intercultural aspects, international view, problem-based projects, IT, writing process, portfolio, personal responsibility.

Basic ideas in our very intercultural society with more than 100 different cultures and languages in a country with nine million inhabitants, are Social justice, Pluralism and Interdependence co-operation - not only within the educational system, but meaning, among other things, a strategy for equal access to knowledge and learning processes, multilingualism and respect and understanding. The way to multiculturalism goes from equality, freedom of choice, integrity, to interdependence and co-operation. Thus, the school system should underline the importance of discovering otherness as a relationship, of recognising values of knowledge, skills and contribution to the learning process, and of recognising criteria for optimum interaction processes in the classroom.

Our concept of a "learning society" means that education takes place in many environments and by various organisations outside the school system – in extramural open

university classes, evening classes, "komvux" (municipal adult education), "folkhögskolor" (a Scandinavian kind of alternative secondary living-in schools for adults), in-service training, private units.

### **The overall educational system in Sweden**

The school system has undergone major changes in the past decades. Pre-schools have been given augmented pedagogical responsibilities, curricula for the compulsory school and the upper secondary system – the gymnasium – have been radically transformed. There is a large number of independent schools, run by organisations – religious, alternative pedagogic systems as Montessori, Waldorf, other educational units like Folkuniversitetet, or just a group of enthusiastic teachers.

The public school system comprises compulsory schools and various types of voluntary schooling. Compulsory school includes basic schools, schools for the Saami peoples of northern Sweden, special schools for children with impaired sight, hearing, speech, for mentally handicapped. Voluntary schools comprise upper secondary school, municipal adult education and education for mentally handicapped adults. Tuition is free. The academic/school year begins at the end of August and ends early following June, making a total of 40 weeks.

The Swedish Education Act stipulates that all children and young people must have access to education of equal value and it specifies that education should provide pupils with knowledge and skills, and, working together with their homes and parents, promote their harmonious development towards becoming responsible human beings and members of society.

Curricula, national objectives and guidelines are defined by the parliament (Riksdag) and the government. The national budget includes grants to the municipalities. Within the goals and framework defined by parliament and government, each individual municipality is free to decide how its schools should be run. Today's curricula are Lpo94 (Läroplan för de obligatoriska skolformerna) and Lpf94 (Läroplan för de frivilliga skolformerna). Former curricula are from 1962, 1969, and 1980. The curricula underline Goals to strive towards, Goals to be attained, and Guidelines, Norms and Values, acquisition and development of Knowledge, responsibility and influence of pupils.

The municipality - or the independent organiser - has to establish an education plan describing how schooling is to be funded, organised, developed and evaluated. The headmaster of each school must, in consultation with the teachers and other staff, draw up a local working plan, based on the curricula, national objectives and the educational plan.

The National Agency for Education (Skolverket) has the task of developing, (for example syllabi and criteria for grades), evaluating, following up, and supervising state schooling in Sweden – and the independent schools. It was formed in 1991 coin-

ciding with a change in responsibility for the school system – state control was replaced by a target-orientated system with significant local responsibilities.

Pre-school education has to be organised for all children from six years up until school entrance one year later. The compulsory basic school is nine years. Almost all pupils continue directly to the three years of upper secondary school/gymnasium, which is divided into 17 national programmes, 14 of them vocational and three theoretical, but all of which are intended to provide a broad-based education for further studies. In addition there are specially designed and individualised programmes. They all study core subjects ( Swedish/Swedish as a second language, English, civics, mathematics) and every programme also has its specific subjects. There could also be local branches or courses both within the state system (f.ex. different sports, goldsmiths, music, environment protection) and in the independent schools with language profiles or combinations of programmes such as natural science with humanistics. There are also 23 schools which offer IB – International Baccalaureat.

The most popular programme is Media.

Young persons are entitled to enter upper secondary school up till the age of 20. Thereafter they can choose between various forms of municipality or private adult education.

The municipality also has an obligation to offer Swedish for adult immigrants or organise special classes or groups for newcomers pupils within the school system.

Grading systems have also changed: From a system of letters with A as the best mark, B as pass and C as definitely failed (Aa AB Ba B Bc C, with + or - ) we changed to a strongly criticised bell-curve number-based evaluation system during the 60s: 5 (best) to 1. Now the school and courses are managed by goals and programme objectives and the grading system has four steps: MVG (pass with special distinction), VG (pass with distinction), G (pass) and IG (fail). The grades express the extent to which the individual pupil has attained the goals stated in the syllabus for each respective subject or subject-unit. Assistance in awarding grades is provided by means of specific criteria based on the goals in the syllabi for different subjects.

## **The teacher education in Sweden**

### **Philosophy and background**

School systems and teacher education are of course two branches of the same tree, the one deeply dependent on the other. Every nation or culture has its patterns of thoughts. We have a long educational history of reading and writing because of Protestantism – direct access to the Holy Writ was important in the education of the young nation during the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the church was in charge of controlling the system. Regulated by a church law from 1686 the minister was responsible for the reading skills and the parish clerk's duty was to impart them. In 1842 started the national compulsory school and every town or parish had to establish a school with an approved

teacher, "folkskollärare". The same year 13 seminars/colleges opened for teacher training of three, later four terms – by then only open for men. From 1860 state inspectors controlled the skills of the teachers, the fulfilling of the curriculum and the knowledge of the children. Around this time we also meet the class concept and another type of teacher "småskollärare" (a female teacher) in the first two years. And now the profession was available for women. About 1920 the compulsory school was six years, during the 1950s seven. From fourth grade there was a parallel system with schools for girls and lower secondary schools.

The secondary school system has other roots – from 1623 classical gymnasiums were being opened in so-called "school-towns" (Västerås, Linköping, Strängnäs, Skara, Växjö). Latin was the main subject and pupils were to be prepared for university studies or a state career. From 1862 to 1968 the studies ended with "studentexamen", and only a few percentages of a generation attended these theoretical gymnasiums.

From 1865 teachers in upper secondary system first studied their university subjects, then worked as trainees for about a year. Colleges for teacher education did not start until 1956. They were founded first in Stockholm, then in Malmö/Lund, Göteborg, Umeå, Uppsala and Linköping, i.e. the university cities. Research resources came from the Faculties of social science. Units for in-service training were also established. From 1977 all these units and colleges were incorporated into the university system – and there are also some new universities and colleges with teacher education: Borås, Eskilstuna /Västerås, Falun, Gävle, Halmstad, Härnösand, Kalmar, Karlstad, Kristianstad, Luleå, Växjö, Örebro. The studies/programmes are aimed for school-year 1-3, 4-6 and 7-9 + gymnasium, mother tongue teaching or pre-school. And still separate educational units/colleges for teachers in music, sport, crafts, and vocational subjects.

Ten years later came the next change, now with an overlapping concept – the students could choose teacher programme for the years 1-7 (140 credits), 4-9 (180 credits) in the compulsory school or the gymnasium. (One credit=one week, 40 credits = an academic year) The combinations of subjects were mostly within the same scientific area: Swedish and modern languages, social sciences, science and mathematics. Some rare combinations of theoretical and practical subjects: Swedish and music, mathematics and sport, English and textile handicraft, were also possible.

The themes for discussion about teacher education are however always the same; is the scientific depths, didactics or the methodological skills the most important? Theoretical knowledge or practical training? Combination of subjects? How to control the competence of the teachers? Trainee years for young teachers? Should there be a mentor from the university or school for the new teachers? How to arrange the in-service training? How to recruit students for teacher education at all? Special educational programmes for school leaders? We are foreseeing great problems during the next decade, when the large numbers of teachers born in the 1940s will retire. Too few students apply for the scientific programmes. It is also seen as important that Sweden has a teaching establishment that reflects the composition of the population as far as possible, therefore efforts to accommodate specific recruitment will be made.

### **The teacher education in force**

Now - from last year, 2001, there is a new integrated system of teacher education (Governments prop.1999/2000:135) which replaces the former degree description given in the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) and thence formulating the objectives for the educational programme and the qualitative requirements facing trainee teachers. This new programme is supposed to give students a chance to develop the skills connected with the social duties and responsibility for pupil welfare as an essential part of the teaching profession. Only one degree, worth 120 to 220 credits, has replaced eight of the former degrees, and increased resources will be given for research and post-graduate studies for students and in-service training improvement. This new teaching degree is made of three areas: a general field of education, one or more areas of emphasis, and one area of specialisation. The admission has a new system, in short: one "wide" main entrance and successive choices of subjects/ subject areas/ field of work during the studies. The "new" values and commitments should be expressed as flexibility, genuine student ownership, new partnership for learning, life-long learning, enhanced possibilities for self-determined learning and critical reflection, and development of new learning communities around new content areas.

- The general field of education is requiring 60 credits, at least 10 of which are tied to practical experience in schools. The field is comprising areas of knowledge that are central to the teaching profession such as learning and teaching, special needs education, socialisation, cultural matters, social assignment, democracy and values of society, child and youth development, as well as interdisciplinary subject studies. Twenty of these credits are taken in the first term, and the students meet in mixed groups, not related to subjects or levels at school.
- The educational area with the emphasis on a particular subject or subject areas is requiring at least 40 credits, at least 10 of which are tied to practical experience in schools and correspond to the subjects and the age of the pupils that the student teachers intend to work with.
- The specialised educational area which requires at least 20 credits is deepening, broadening, supplementing or providing new approaches to the knowledge that the students have previously acquired.
- Within the framework of these three educational areas the students will also produce an independent degree thesis worth at least 10 credits.
- The different teaching qualifications will vary in length between 120 and 220 credits and will give basic eligibility for post-graduate studies.

In order to be qualified to teach at various levels of schools the requirements of credits vary. To teach in:

- pre-schools and the first years of the compulsory school as well as school-age child care and mother tongue tuition, 140 credits,

- later years of compulsory comprehensive school and upper secondary schools, (including in-depth studies in one or two subjects) 180 credits,
- upper secondary school, vocational programmes, 120 credits.

If Swedish language and literature or civics are the main subjects they will require 60 credits in the compulsory school and 80 credits in the upper secondary.

There is an option to take a degree with certain specific subjects and qualification profiles– for example for those, in our intercultural society, so needed mother tongue teachers with a combination of the general field, a 60 credits profile with focus on teaching mother tongue and 20 credits specialisation. Teachers in vocational programmes in upper secondary school may obtain their degree by taking 60 credits in higher education relevant to the vocational sphere or by acquiring other equivalent education in conjunction with relevant professional experience. The general field will also be needed. To teach a single subject will be unusual in the new programme – the reformed school system increasingly requires teachers to have several subjects.

School located studies will improve integration of practice and theory/research, and deepen the understanding of local conditions, and prepare students for school related team-work.

#### **And some alternative ways – as usual**

There is also another possibility for teacher education: people who have acquired subject qualifications in some other way should be given opportunity to supplement their training in the field of general education and thereby obtain their teacher certification.

Among all the refugees and immigrants who, mostly during the last 30 years, have transformed Sweden into a multicultural society, there are a lot of highly educated people, many teachers with long experience from their home countries. To make it possible for them to work in our school system they might attend a specially designed education programmes.

#### **Skill development for practising teachers**

Teachers practising their profession should be able to take part in the undergraduate programme – it should be possible to offer them to participate in both, the general field of education, and in areas of emphasis and specialisation, attending the same courses in joint classes – partly by means of modern IT - the concept of in-service training will be replaced by the wider concept of skills development, meaning broader and deeper studies, methods development, team-work, research and development work. The local authorities have responsibility to facilitate the teacher's own competence development by making up local plans.

### **Special needs education and gender equality**

Special needs teaching is strengthened in the new programme, both in the general field and within the areas of emphasis and specialisation. Gender equality should be given special attention.

### **Media and information technology**

School should provide children with tools for acquiring, processing and forming opinions about the continually increasing flow of information. Educational development in the field of information technology will be stimulated.

### **Research situation**

The strengthening of the link with the research was one of the main reasons for incorporation of teacher training into universities in 1977 – but the expectations in this field have not been fulfilled. An adequate research base in the field of teacher education has not been built up and too little of the research on teaching and schools has been linked to teacher education, but, these have been built up within the theoretical departments of pedagogics. The lecturers in the Ph.D. educational programmes have their research experiences from pedagogics or from subjects within other Faculties – modern languages, literature, mathematics, history etc. Too few students have taken part in research programmes and the number of teachers in schools with research qualifications is low, and the school system has not benefited from the research done. The conditions for research and post-graduate education will now be significantly improved.

### **Aims and principles of governance**

Teacher education is governed on a national level through the Degree Ordinance. The objectives are expressed as teacher qualifications/competence, and the objectives should be used in the planning of the education as well as in the internal and external evaluations. A special body, a faculty board or equivalent, with overall responsibility for education, associated research and postgraduate courses, is set up at each institute of higher education, on which teachers, students, local authorities, and active teachers from the school system are represented.

The universities and colleges with teacher education programmes have, to a large extent, freedom to organise the studies in accord with their own history, structure, numbers of Faculties and subjects etc. There is also a committee on educational science within the National Science Council, a new agency for research funding. One of the reasons is to provide greater opportunities for joint action and interdisciplinary research and to guarantee that research is carried out in areas that are of national interest. Research and post-graduate studies, judged to be of high scientific quality and which are pursued in educational science networks, will receive funding. Within the network, researchers and post-graduate students from different universities and university colleges are to jointly develop projects. The increased resources will also be used to extend post-graduate studies in so-called research schools. To facilitate the choices for the students during their period of study there will be special advisers.

### One example – Göteborg University

The structure and the organisation, the co-operation between the different departments and subjects, the interpretation of the curriculum, the courses and the literature lists are different from university to university. This is one of the consequences of the concept of decentralisation. In a positive interpretation this means a possibility for creating a special profile for every unit, while, in a negative one it means that there has been a lot of double work, of comparing, consulting, planning groups among colleagues, departments, universities and colleges.

Let me give as an example my own university: Göteborg University. It is the second largest in Sweden, with 38,000 students, and 2,500 teachers and researchers. It has Faculties for Arts, Social science, Education, Science, Medicine, and Odontology. Also, it has five schools for fine and applied art with their own Faculty Board: Valand School of Fine Arts, the School of Design and Crafts, the School of Theatre and Opera, the School of Music and Musicology and the School of Photography and Film. Some 70 departments and a special board for inter-disciplinary activity are a feature of Göteborg university. All faculties are involved in the new education. The Department of Education has a central position. It is a large department, with 300 employees and about 3,500 students, and a large number of courses not only connected to the teacher education.

The chosen structure is to form the subjects and the entrances into nine fields of knowledge which give 32 different entrances. The students might choose the field, entrance and combination of subjects from the beginning, or they may apply for an open entrance and choose along the studies. But, whatever they choose they must have "cognitive, cultural, communicative, creative, critical, social and didactical competence".

Fields of knowledge	possible subjects and specialisations(examples)
Biology and Biotechnics	biology marine biology biotechnics genetics
Mathematics and Learning	didactic of mathematics applied mathematics
Science and Society	astronomy (bio)chemistry geography physics
Society and Media	Europe and welfare globalisation and intercultural meetings human rights communication in society
Technology and Environment	design and technology environmental protection
Cultural heritage and Ethics	history religion ethics history of science
Culture and Communication	music handicraft design and technology
Languages and Cultural diversity	modern or classical languages Swedish Swedish as second language rhetorics intercultural communication
Pedagogics for special needs and Communication	all kinds of courses concerning children with special needs and handicap

### **Foreseen Problems and daily questions**

The wide freedom of choices, all possible, and new combinations of subjects, profiles, specialities, the diversity, the decentralisation, many faculties, subjects, communes, schools, scientific traditions and people involved, different organisations in all universities and colleges – it is so far not quite easy to organise the new teacher education. We have a large number of students – 650 started in the autumn of 2001, the first term of the new education. How to find the ultimate competence among the teachers involved - is it always related to where the resources are? How to change the traditional patterns of thinking? Do the teachers/researchers from departments that have not until now been involved in this kind of courses need in-service training? How to help a student who wants to change university? How to integrate subjects – inter-personally, inter-departmentally, in groups or courses? What about progression? Can the students be sure to get their first choice of field or subject? Co-operation between the university administration and the municipality administration is sometimes an intriguing meeting between two cultures. Hundreds and hundreds of students need mentoring while writing their papers and degree theses – how to find time and relevant skills? The education is supposed to be valuable also in working life outside the school system – how many will disappear to other working areas? What impact will these new teachers have on the school system, i.e. do we have to initiate a new reorganisation?

It ought to be so easy – like the motto for my university: *Tradita innovare, innovata tradere* – to renew the inherited knowledge and to communicate the renewed knowledge.

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- [www.skolverket.se](http://www.skolverket.se) (About the National Agency for education, The Swedish school system, Programme Objectives, Upper secondary school.)