

Appendix 2

The Development of the Swedish Educational System

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Research colleagues from abroad sometimes describe encounters with Swedish school systems and educational theory as a visit to a very large, extended village. Not because we are particularly isolated or undeveloped – at least this is what they say – but because most teachers have relatively similar frames of reference, work under the same conditions, often share the same values, and they often know one another even if they work far apart. The same goes for pedagogical research: even with much variation in the theoretical approach and the way of working, there is more to unite than to separate.

This kind of first impression of the Swedish educational world captures much of the basic preconditions for pedagogical work in Sweden, since there has always been a large component of central control and homogeneity in the Swedish educational system. But there has also been a fundamental difference that has permeated schools. In the tension between these two poles, the teacher develops his knowledge.

The Swedish educational system has its roots in a society of great uniformity (Hartman 1994). The elementary school was established in a fairly compact, Lutheran, uniform culture. Even when secularisation lessened the influence of the Church, the culture was still fairly closed. Since World War II, however, pluralism has grown at an ever-increasing rate. For the school system this has meant that certain basics have changed. A school class of the 1940s looked entirely different from a typical class of the 1980s, not to mention the school life in the big cities at the beginning of the third millennium. Greater social mobility, more secularisation, and increased immigration partly explain the new situation.

	Uniform culture	Pluralism
	Predominant Lutheranism	Growing secularisation
Centralism	1	2
Dominating state control		
Decentralism	3	4
Dominating local control		

Figure 1. Four different social standpoints for the formulation of school policy

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The model sketched in Figure 1 illustrates this change. It indicates a shift from position 1 to position 2, from a centrally governed school system to one that, while it is still centralistic regarding content at least, has to operate in a pluralistic society. This change certainly went on for a long time, but was not fully visible until after World War II.

Changes in Swedish educational policy during the past twenty years have been in the direction of increased local autonomy. In addition, during this period a start has been made on applying a very generous policy towards independent schools. Until the beginning of the 1990s, private or independent schools were very rare in Sweden. These changes would seem to imply a shift from position 2 towards position 4 in the model.

The changes are certainly linked with the international neo-liberal trend and the awareness of the market that have been visible in international educational development in recent years (cf. Gök's Appendix 1, this volume). The centralistic school policy became expensive to administer, and increased local control, it was assumed, would lead to more effective school economies, greater variation, greater freedom of choice and thus better quality (Ball 1987, Miron 1993, Englund 1994, Gewirtz et al. 1995).

New trends in Swedish educational policy created new conditions for teachers' career development. Since the middle of the 19th century two competing teacher groups – grammar-school teachers, *adjunkter* and *lektorer* versus elementary-school teachers *småskollärare* and *folkskollärare* – have seen their professional status successively enhanced with the help of the state bureaucratic apparatus and through laws and regulations. This is how the teacher groups' professional claims *vis-à-vis* parents and the clergy were asserted once upon a time.

After the economic turn in school administration in the 1990s, the state was announcing that much of the work of the school was to be governed on the basis of the teacher groups' own professionalism and with cooperation between local educational authorities and the teaching body. This was no longer the job of the state and the Parliament.

Thus teachers' autonomy with reference to central authority is said to be increased, but at the same time the dependence of their position relative to school managers and local educational politicians has grown. Today politicians often speak about 'professional teachers', but at least in some respects the teachers' professional autonomy has decreased in the last few years. Nevertheless the possible remaining conflicts of interest between the two large teacher groups have to be handled at local level.

Two different teaching systems merge into one

One of the peculiarities of Swedish education is that it has long consisted of two mutually independent teaching systems: one for elementary education and one for higher studies where the clergy and public officials were educated. Even though the Church had a strong influence on both, the systems were kept separate from the Middle Ages until the time of World War II. Not until the

1990s was pre-school recognised as a third part of the common educational system in Sweden.

This division into two, then three, has permeated educational discussion in Sweden. Different views and traditions developed in the separate systems. The way of looking at teaching and knowledge, pupil and teacher roles, school and society was different.

Läroverket: The Grammar School

Schools for the education of the clergy and public officials had the longest history, with roots in the Middle Ages. But neither these schools and their teachers nor the *djäknar*, the grammar-school pupils, had an especially high status to begin with. Indeed, to get anyone at all who was willing to assume the hateful occupation of teaching in a grammar school, a system had to be introduced during the 18th century whereby one could count two years of service for each academic year. But in the middle of the 19th century a change took place. Society's demand for more specialised studies began to make itself felt. The tendency became one in which the classical languages gradually lost ground to scientific subjects.

During this period the social status of the *läroverk*, the grammar school, improved markedly. In contrast to how the grammar school pupils had been viewed previously, it was now thought possible to distinguish among the grammar school boys the country's hopes for the future. It was they who would head authorities and firms. It was not that the grammar school gave them the education they needed for their future working lives, but that their school days afforded them a social position which could lead directly or indirectly to leading positions. The grammar school students were regarded as superior to their contemporaries in the town. During the 19th century the *läroverk* became increasingly a school for the sons of the well-to-do. Even boys from the very highest level in the country could now be sent to the grammar school (Florin and Johansson 1993).

This development also affected the position of grammar school teachers in a positive direction. Their social status improved markedly, and so did their salaries. Their professional position was strengthened through the introduction of new teaching subjects, and, in other ways, the educational level was raised and they became more independent of the Church.

Popular education, Folkskolan: The Elementary School

In 1992 the 150th anniversary of the Swedish elementary school was celebrated, but it was not with the 1842 Elementary School Statute that popular education started. There was a well-developed system of popular education much earlier. Nor was it the case that the elementary school was all prepared once the statute had been adopted. Swedish popular education has very deep roots. Put simply, through the Reformation Christianity became a book religion. The sermon became the central element in the cult and church books, primarily the psalm book and the small catechism, carried very great weight.

The programme of popular education was filled out. It was stressed more and more that it was not enough to know the catechism by heart, one also had to be able to *read* ‘and see with thine own eyes what God in His holy word offers and commands’.

The 1686 Ecclesiastical Act was an important milestone for Swedish popular education. It indicated effective methods of checking that the population was fulfilling the obligations prescribed by the educational programme. The Act made parents and masters responsible for teaching their children and servants to read. It charged the clergy to check and record, by means of oral examinations at parish catechetical meetings, that parents were performing their teaching duties, with approved results.

This early popular education was based on the double principle of the family head's duty to instruct and the clerical officials' duty to examine. To be able to read and to know one's catechism became required previous knowledge for preparation for confirmation and first Holy Communion, and this in turn was a condition for being accepted into the adult community (Johansson 1995).

The system proved to be effective. As early as the 18th century Swedes were a reading people, as were their Nordic neighbours. Parents' obligation to instruct became an important family matter, which in time was to be defended when the authorities produced new regulations demanding that teaching should be managed by professional teachers. This meant that the elementary school teachers, with the support of the authorities, were obliged to wrest their professional territory from the parents and to some extent from the Church.

The adoption of the 1842 Elementary School Statute implied two important decisions of principle. First, it meant that popular education assumed the character of an educational task and not a matter for the poorhouse. Secondly, popular education was to be kept entirely separate from education for the ‘public class’, that is, the form of school that was to be designated as *läroverk* and which corresponded most closely to the grammar school (Richardson, 1992).

Folkskolan, the elementary school, was, strictly speaking, a kind of religious school during its first 75 years. Religious instruction was the most important subject. The Lutheran Church was the responsible authority, and the vicar was the principal. The 1919 curriculum for the elementary school involved considerable changes. The religious instruction was reduced by 50 per cent and social studies, mathematics and the mother tongue were given more time. The secularisation of the school system had started. Fostering for national citizenship instead of the Lutheran faith became the task of the school system.

Two merge into one – Grundskolan: The Comprehensive School

In time the position of the grammar school teachers was upset by the professional claims of elementary school teachers. The elementary school teachers were pressing for coordination of the separate educational systems and for a common course of studies for all children – a basic school – for the first six years of schooling. This issue dominated educational discussion in

Sweden from the 1880s until the foundation of the Swedish comprehensive school in 1962. The 1940s and 1950s were the decades of the committee and the pilot scheme. The requirements for a new content in school activity and for a new organisation were investigated and debated. The idea of a basic school was to be implemented at last.

The comprehensive school reform involved combining previously parallel forms of school. The upper part of the elementary school, termed the continuation school, the lower secondary school, the girls' school and parts of former vocational schemes now became, in a combined form, the upper grades of the comprehensive school. Compulsory schooling was lengthened from seven years to nine. This involved a great increase in the size of the school sector. More teachers were needed and new school premises. This, in turn, required the merging of municipalities to provide a sufficiently large economic base. Educational development and municipal development went hand in hand.

In the structure of the new school traces of the earlier systems can be seen clearly. The comprehensive school was to be one school, but it had three levels, with three teacher categories corresponding to what had existed in different forms of school at the beginning of the century. The designation of the different teacher groups was changed, but the question is whether ways of working changed to the same extent.

Large sections of the former parallel school system were incorporated into the comprehensive school system. This is evident from *Lgr 62*, the first Comprehensive School Curriculum. The upper level was differentiated with various study choices in the ninth year. The options largely corresponded to the choices that had been available in the old parallel school system. The detailed syllabus seems to have been inspired by the former lower secondary school. However, the methods prescribed in *Lgr 62* agree with the notions of 'the activity teaching approach'. Five principles were to apply to teaching: it was to be characterised by Motivation, Activity, Concretion, Individualisation and Cooperation. The acronym of their Swedish initials MAKIS became the methodological formula for teaching in the comprehensive school (OECD, 1980). The distinction built into the comprehensive school also existed in teacher training, which offered entirely different programmes for the three teacher categories.

Not until 1988 was a new programme of teacher education initiated with the purpose of creating a mixed-ability educational system and a single teacher category for the comprehensive school. The problems we have been struggling with since then have consisted of getting different teacher-training traditions to work together and getting the two to become one.

Förskolan, the Pre-school – a separate part of the educational system

Pre-school education in different forms did not start in Sweden until the beginning of the 20th century. From the start, it was privately organised, based on philanthropic initiative from idealistic women. Caring for small children was not considered to be a concern of the local authorities or of the state.

The pre-school pioneers were inspired by the German educator Friedrich Fröbel (1782-1852) and the *Kindergarten* movement. Pre-school work was limited for a long time. Not until the 1950s did some of the largest cities become engaged in day care and pre-school work. Ten years later the state took some important initiatives in pre-school matters, and soon the child-care system became an important mechanism for getting women out into the labour market and in that way modernising society. At the state level, as well as at the local municipal level, social, not educational, authorities handled pre-school matters for a long time. Today almost all children in Sweden go to pre-school. Childcare has become every child's and every parent's right. The educational ideology has obviously developed, but the care of the child is still essential in the educational profile.

The structure of the educational system today

After all these reforms and changes, the Swedish school system today consists of three main parts: the pre-school (0-6 years) or *förskolan*, the compulsory school (7-15 years) or *grundskolan*, and the secondary school (16-18 years) or *gymnasieskolan*. There are no parallel forms of school overlapping each other teaching pupils of the same age. Handicapped pupils are as far as possible integrated into normal classes, but there is also a special school plan with its own economy and organisation.

Within this homogeneous school system, different schools and working units are supposed to set up their own profiles and compete with each other in the 'school market', thus creating variation within the homogeneous system. In addition to this new school programme, much remains of educational ideas and traditions derived from the different teaching professions.

Teacher education. Three separate teaching-houses merging into one

In my view, using these examples from educational history, one can observe three steps in the growth of the teachers' professional field (Goodson 2003). First, practical knowledge predominates, then a special value basis develops in the two teacher groups and gradually a scientific perspective is introduced in and on teachers' work. I see these as three separate perspectives within which teachers' knowledge has developed.

Educational systems and their ideological views have often been compared to intellectual edifices or teaching-houses. In Sweden teacher knowledge has been developed, both figuratively and literally, in different houses. The basic structure of the buildings has been the same, that is, a foundation of practical teaching skill has been successively reinforced with a floor of particular values and then given a scientific superstructure. But the fittings on the three floors and the devices on the façade have differed in the different knowledge-houses (Hartman 2005).

Bildung (education) and subject knowledge were focused in the house that the grammar school tradition built for its teacher knowledge. It was thus the care and the handing-on of knowledge that was long considered the main task of

grammar school and university teachers, not research. This view was current until well into the 20th century. *Bildung* had a higher priority than subject specialisation, and was in fact considered a condition for specialisation. During the latter part of the 19th century, research was increasingly carried on in the universities. This is how the modern university came about. A new body of knowledge grew up and expanded at an increasing tempo. This entailed changes in the professional profile, the teaching-house was altered with the addition of new rooms. It was no longer necessary to 'know everything', you had to specialise within some particular discipline and 'know your subject'. A more enclosed concept of knowledge was to gain ground. The underlying rationale in this tradition has built on subject knowledge and academic discipline.

Training for teaching was the device that, figuratively speaking, was written over the other house, the teaching-house where teachers were trained for the needs of the elementary school. The professional skills of the first elementary teachers were aimed at the ability to handle teaching large and clearly separated pupil groups: children of the masses together and children of the better-off together. Routines and means of control had to be acquired that allowed the teacher to control gigantic classes: classes long remained very large. Later on, the capacity to individualise and adapt the teaching to the individual needs of the pupils became an important dimension of the teacher knowledge. The underlying rationale for this tradition has been didactical, focusing on the art of teaching.

Caring for children has always been focused in the third teaching-house. The ability to be together with children and to lead them in educational situations is fundamental. The pre-school tradition is child-centred, combining social and educational goals. To have a deep knowledge about children in different ways has been the central dimension of the pre-school teacher profession. In contrast to the two other teaching-houses, this tradition was built by women for women. The ground for this tradition has been a caring rationale.

In 2001 there was a big reform in Swedish teacher training (see also Rabo, this volume). The rapid developments in modern society and the far-reaching changes in the school during the 1990s made reform necessary. The decentralisation of the school demands new professional skills from the teachers. The integration of pre-school, elementary school and leisure centre presupposes cooperation between different professional groups. As a consequence, these groups need a common competence as the ground for their work. Eight different training programmes from different traditions were brought together in a new teacher-training programme.

The new programme is marked by *academisation*, on the one hand, and by *generalisation* on the other. Most teacher students are given more academic/theoretical studies than before and their training is no longer so specialised towards particular age groups. The former will perhaps strengthen their professional status but the consequences of the latter may be doubtful, in my opinion. Possibly the new kind of teacher training will make teachers versatile and flexible, at least from the employers' point of view.

THREE TEACHING-HOUSES IN ONE

Dimensions of teacher knowledge	Subject-focused grammar school traditions	Teaching-focused elementary school traditions	Child-focused pre-school traditions
Sciences	Scientific development within teaching subjects	Scientific development about teachers and teaching	Scientific development within child research
Values	Enlightenment – <i>Bildung</i>	Teaching as an art	Caring about Children – A calling
Practice	To know one's subject	To know how to teach	Knowing about children

Figure 2: Traditions and dimensions of teacher knowledge

A new modern, some would call it post-modern, teaching-house has been built for the new programme. Within the framework of a common programme, the student encounters many different teacher traditions representing more than two hundred years of educational cultural heritage. It will probably take a long time before the borders between professions and traditions fade away. In the meantime, teacher students have to navigate between the different conflicting traditions, specialities, ideologies and practices of the teaching professions. Let us hope they do not go astray.

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