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Building up Structures and Institutional Frameworks: Policies, Legal Provisions, Delivery system and Innovations

Introduction to distinctive features of the Swedish educational system

Characteristic of the Swedish education system is steering by goals and results, as well as decentralisation of responsibility for implementing education. This is not unique to the education system, as in the last few decades the whole of the public system has moved from a rule-oriented approach towards steering by goals and results. This means that the framework is determined at the central (national) level and lays down what should be achieved and the framework within which work should be carried out. However, the local level makes decisions on how it should act, and what activities should be implemented in order to achieve the specified goals. A foundation stone of Swedish democracy is independent authorities making their own decisions in specific cases.

Steering by goals and results is an instrument used in the curricula and syllabuses in the school area, as well as in the state authorities in managing their responsibilities for universities and university colleges. For instance, the Degree Ordinance regulates what students should achieve to be awarded a higher education degree, but states nothing at the central level as to how courses should be organised and run. This is determined at the local level, and this work presupposes the participation of both teachers and students, and at lower ages participation of pupils and parents.

As regards working conditions of teachers, there are only framework laws, such as the Act on the Working Environment and general labour legislation. In other respects what specifically concerns staff in the education system is regulated in central and local collective agreements made between the employers and trade union organisations. In this area there has also been a trend towards more comprehensive agreements at the central level, where substance is then decided at the local level, so that as far as possible account is taken of the local situation. Rules for working conditions laid down in collective agreements also apply to staff that are not members of a trade union.

An important feature of the Swedish education system is homogeneity -- namely the same basic ideas are found throughout the whole of the education system i.e. accessibility, openness, equivalence and quality. Homogeneity is evidenced in many different ways;

- Through the curricula for the pre-school, the compulsory school and the upper secondary school where they have the same foundation values and in many respects the same basic structure,

- By children and young persons with different kinds of functional impairments being integrated as far as possible in mainstream public education,
- By integration of vocationally oriented and general education in the upper secondary school, where all education programmes contain the same core subjects which all pupils study,
- By the fact that the system has no "dead-ends", where a wide range of adult education options is a guarantee that it is always possible to re-enter the formal education system,
- By also having a homogeneous framework in higher education, where there is no difference between universities and university colleges in their undergraduate programmes.

A brief overview of the adult education

The Swedish system for adult education and learning can be described through five more or less inter-related strands of education, training and learning.

The first strand of adult education provides Municipal adult education up to the level of upper secondary school, consisting of Basic municipal education for adult, which corresponds to education provided in the nine-year compulsory school and upper secondary adult education, based on the same curriculum and syllabuses as those offered in the regular upper secondary school programmes for young persons.

To this strand also belongs Education for adults with learning disabilities. Education for adults with learning disabilities is a special form of education for mentally disabled adults, provided by the municipality. On the basis of previous education, experience and abilities, this form is intended to supplement earlier education.

Swedish tuition for immigrants is a special form of education that is intended to provide immigrants with Swedish language skills and knowledge about Swedish society. The municipality is obliged to offer Swedish for immigrants to adult immigrants.

The second strand consists of adult education at a higher education level, mainly in the form of the recently established Advanced Vocational Education (AVE), financed by the state. This education is carried out in close cooperation with representatives of working life, who participate directly in devising the training programmes and finance the workplace training scheme "Learning in Working Life", which represents one-third of the total training period adult education as well as supplementary education and labour market training. What is of particular interest is the dual approach introduced, using a combination of education in school and training in enterprises.

The third strand which is termed Liberal adult education (Folkbildning) including folk high schools and educational associations that (study circles) is partly subsidized by the State through The Swedish National Council of Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet). Folk high school courses, and study circles and cultural activities offered by the educational associations are targeted at people from all groups in society and cover a broad range of subjects at various levels.

Labour market training should be looked upon as a separate strand of adult education and training. This is due to the fact that this form of training is governed according to separate objectives set by the Ministry of Industry.

The fifth strand is the in-company training, focusing on the particular learning needs of working life, is not considered as ordinary adult education and for this reason we leave it apart in this paper.

As the description has showed, we do not talk of a clear 'system' of adult education, training and learning in Sweden. We are rather talking about more or less clearly defined sub-systems fulfilling different roles and functions that provide adults broad possibilities for learning. Pursuing different roles and functions does not mean, however, that these sub-systems can, or indeed should, operate in isolation from each other.

Higher education has an important role in implementing the Governments strategy on lifelong learning. Higher education is as all publicly financed education free of charge. The student's attending higher education is eligible for study assistance as well as students attending adult education. In this paper we have excluded higher education since it is separated from adult education in the education system. It is however possible to attend municipal adult education in order to be eligible for studies at higher education. A great part of those attending municipal adult education do so in order to enhance their possibilities to attend higher education. By attending municipal adult education an individual can get a general qualification as well as a special qualification for higher studies.

Municipal adult education

Adult education has well-established traditions in Sweden and the two main forms are municipal adult education and liberal adult education. Municipal adult education consists of basic and upper secondary education for adults with the same national curricula as in the school system, as well as special supplementary education programmes. The municipalities are obliged to provide basic adult education to all who are in need of it. Groups given priority for admission to upper secondary adult education are those who have less than three years of upper secondary education. The municipalities are responsible for all municipal adult education, but different organisations may provide the education. All municipal adult education is free of charge.

Liberal adult education

A very large part of the Swedish population participates in liberal adult education each year and this is an important component in lifelong learning. The goal of liberal adult education is to strengthen opportunities for people to influence their living conditions, contribute to creating involvement in order to participate in development of society, as well as broaden participation in cultural life. Liberal adult education reaches many of those who do not normally participate in other ways.

147 Folk high schools and 10 adult education associations provide liberal adult education. Folk high schools offer courses at various levels from general courses at compulsory and upper secondary levels to special courses in subjects such as music, media studies, handicraft, languages, development aid etc. Some vocationally oriented courses are also provided. No national curricula are followed, instead there is freedom to decide how the education should be organised and carried out.

The study circle is the most common activity and most typical of the adult education organisations. A study circle consists of a group of people who together plan and run their studies in a subject, theme or problem area, with or without a specialist teacher. Study circles are run in a variety of subjects based on the interests of participants. Around three-quarters of the population in Sweden have taken part at some time in a study circle.

Student financial support

One of the cornerstones of Swedish educational policy is that every person who wishes to attend an education should be able to do so without regards of social, economic or geographical background. Hence virtually all state or state subsidised education is free of charge. The national study assistance scheme is designed to further the objectives of the government educational policy. By a generous study assistance scheme the economic obstacles for the individual will be reduced.

The study financial support system is general, thus everybody who is over 20 years of age and accepted for higher or adult education is eligible, and does not take in account the financial situation of the student's parents, spouse or cohabitant only the student's income can affect the amount of the grant.

The study assistance cannot generally be awarded after the year of the student's 50th birthday. Although study assistance may be awarded to persons over 50 only for vocationally oriented studies in areas in which there is a shortage of labour. The study assistance consists of two components – a student grant and a loan.

History

Sweden has a long tradition of adult learning, the first folk high schools having been established in as early as the mid-19th century when local self-government was introduced. Lecturing societies already existed in the first half of the 19th century and the major Swedish liberal adult movements set up study circles from the turn of the 20th century.

The entire Swedish school system underwent reform after the end of the Second World War, with the introduction of a compulsory nine-year school and a heavily expanded upper secondary school. The 1960s were characterised by a shortage of qualified labour, and a widening education gap between younger and older generations.

In the late 1960s, the education policy debate was largely influenced by an awareness that the knowledge acquired during childhood and youth is not sufficient for a whole lifetime's need for knowledge. Recurrent training was a strategy underlying the shaping of the adult education reforms of the 1970s. During the 1970s, support to liberal adult education was increased and a number of student welfare reforms introduced, including an act on the right to educational leave and generous financial study support for adults. A comprehensive reform of the system of financial study support for adults was implemented in 1976. The trade unions were active advocates of an expanded system of adult education and liberal education became an instrument for increased democratisation.

Municipal adult education

A reform of the adult education system was implemented in 1968. Each municipality was made responsible for the provision of education for adults corresponding to the nine-year compulsory school and to the theoretically- and vocationally-oriented upper secondary school programmes. Government grants were given towards salary costs for teachers, head teachers, study counsellors and vocational advisers.

During the 1970s the municipal adult education system underwent a significant expansion and in 1982 it acquired its own curriculum and status as an independent form of schooling. Adults' educational opportunities were highlighted by means of a special Adult Education Act and municipal adult education was afforded a special profile as a skills-enhancing form of education adapted to the specific needs and abilities of adults.

The Education Act (1985:1100) formulates the objectives for adult education as follows:

"The national adult education system shall give adults an opportunity, in accordance with their individual wishes, to supplement their education. Primarily those who have received the least education shall thus be given an opportunity to strengthen their position in working life and in cultural and political life. The education shall be equivalent within each type of school irrespective of where in the country it is provided. The activities within

national adult education shall be structured in accordance with fundamental democratic values”.

In the early 1990s changes were made regarding the division of responsibilities and the system of government grants for education, which meant deregulation, decentralisation and management by objectives. The municipalities were given a wide responsibility for education at this time. The municipalities were steered by goals and objectives instead of a direct steering from the government. A joint curriculum was introduced for municipal adult education and upper secondary schools, including common syllabuses and a common grading system. The first half of the 1990s were characterised by major changes in the economy, in working life and in society as a whole. In response to widespread unemployment, special courses were arranged for the unemployed, as part of traditional labour market training, municipal adult education and at folk high schools.

Liberal adult education

In 1991, the form of management for liberal adult education, i.e., folk high schools and educational associations, changed from management by regulation to indirect management by objectives. The changes in the division of responsibilities between the Government and providers of liberal adult education means that the Government sets out the aims of government grants and the providers of liberal education establish the actual objectives of their operations. Government grants for liberal education are administered by the Swedish National Council of Adult Education, which is a non-profit organisation established in 1991 by the National Federation of Adult Educational Associations, the Swedish Federation of County Councils and the Association of Folk High Schools Interest Organisation. According to its statutes, the Swedish National Council of Adult Education is obliged, on behalf of its members, to fulfil certain requirements set out by the Government and the Parliament in order to receive government funding for the activities provided by study associations and folk high schools. The Council is responsible for the distribution of government grants, as well as administration, organisation, follow-up and evaluation of activities. The second government commission of inquiry into liberal education since 1991 was appointed in the autumn of 2001, with the task of making an overall assessment of the extent to which national liberal education objectives have been fulfilled. The findings are to be presented in March 2004.

Policies

Flexibility in Adult learning

Adult education should serve to support flexible and lifelong learning and to a greater extent fulfil people's need for learning on the basis of individual wishes, needs and abilities. Modern technology and teaching methods enable considerable individualisation and a greater geographic spread. This flexibility should give both men and women the opportunity to combine continued learning with their working and private lives.

Lifelong Learning

The role of the state is to create the *opportunities* for versatile learning and the national strategy should support both organised and non-organised learning situations. The establishment of forms for cooperation between different political spheres of activity is important for the development of support for lifelong learning. The strategy is the same for different areas of activity and aims to create a coherent welfare policy that can benefit all citizens. Society supports both formal and non-formal learning in many different ways. Most support for formal, organised learning is provided as part of the framework of education policy, which comprises different forms of education in the formal education system as well as financial study support. Within the framework of labour market policy, education is supported in the form of labour market training and industrial and tax policies serve to support continuing professional development in working life.

The Swedish education policy is aimed to make Sweden a leading knowledge-based nation characterised by high quality lifelong learning for economic growth and justice. Education and continuing professional development are of central importance for democracy and the participation of citizens in society. Municipal adult education gives people the opportunity, on the basis of individual wishes, to supplement their education at comprehensive and upper secondary school level, and also to some extent at post-secondary level. Liberal adult education enables students to depart from their own experiences in their search for knowledge without feeling constrained by result requirements or exclusion mechanisms. The wide range of courses and educational programmes that study circles and folk high schools offer reach a considerable share of the population. As a result of the Adult Education Initiative new educational methods have been developed and many people have been given a unique opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge. The banks of experience and infrastructures that have been developed in the municipalities should be taken advantage of and further developed.

In the spring of 2001 the Government presented a bill on Adult Learning, which laid out a strategy for central, and local government-financed support for adult learning based on the needs of the individual. The focus shifts from education in more school-like forms to a more flexible support for individual learning. In order to achieve learning objectives within reasonable time, it is crucial that the individual is able to study at different levels and in different subject areas at the same time. The use of modern technology to support learning and to disseminate knowledge is an important aspect of the infrastructure for lifelong learning as it helps to reach entire target groups and to further develop teaching methods. Outreach activities, guidance, validation, accessibility and financial study support may be said to constitute the cornerstone of an infrastructure for lifelong learning.

In order to be able to carry on learning continuously, it must be possible for the individual to depart from his actual skills and knowledge. There is clearly a need to make the most of and recognise knowledge, irrespective of how it has been acquired, and it is important that it is possible to validate people's actual

knowledge and professional skills. Validation is an important issue in the context of lifelong learning and validation practices have been developed by a number of municipalities as part of the Adult Education Initiative. The value of high quality guidance also increases and becomes more important in a knowledge-based society, not least, so as to counteract greater education gaps in society. Guidance is about actively supporting the individual to enable him to analyse and formulate his interests and needs so as to gradually identify a target for his studies and/or profession and to find different ways of meeting this target.

The municipalities play an important role as providers of education but they should also develop their role as coordinators of information initiatives, guidance and study opportunities. This could be done by creating forms for cooperation and coordination between municipal authorities, central government authorities and institutions, providers of liberal education, education and consulting companies, the social partners, handicap organisations and other affected actors.

The lifelong learning policy implies that the state is responsible of supporting the individual needs of learning. It implies that the state and municipalities should offer the right learning opportunities for the individual. Its realisation is dependent on the individual, how motivated he is and his ability to search for and make the most of opportunities in the sea of learning. The state and the municipalities are responsible for providing good conditions and opportunities of learning. A system for lifelong learning presupposes flexible educational alternatives and that the individual is aware of the different possibilities and of the requirements for various educational programmes. Lifelong learning requires coordination, a well-developed infrastructure for flexible learning and a coherent national strategy. There is a limit as to how far this rationalistic planning approach can go; lifelong learning cannot be implemented from above, and it can hardly be controlled. Instead, the responsibility of the state involves creating the conditions and incentives for individuals, companies and public actors to invest in education and learning. The point of departure must always be the individual and that the individual is given proper opportunities for further education at all stages of his life. This view necessitates study guidance, individual study plans and a diversity of educational environments. It is the responsibilities of society to create these conditions and to make efforts to reach individuals who do not themselves take the initiative to study.

In the relevant Swedish ministers' viewpoints on the European Commission's memorandum, it emerges that it is important that the discussion on the objectives of lifelong learning also deals not only with the promotion of employability, but also with promotion of active citizenship. The ministers want to include comments on how important it is that the entire education system is permeated by the promotion of active citizenship. The Commission asks whether an individual right for all citizens to acquire and update knowledge and skills through lifelong learning could be conceivable. Since lifelong learning includes both formal and non-formal education, it might be more reasonable to talk about access to learning opportunities than to try to formulate rights to learning. A right means that

something can be demanded and that someone can be held accountable if that demand is not met.

Adult education has had a tremendous development during the last years. One important factor in this sense has been the Adult Education Initiative (AEI), which started on the 1st of July 1997. At this time Sweden had a quite high unemployment rate and the initiative was started as part of the Government's strategy to halve unemployment by the year 2000. The aim of the state and municipalities was to achieve an overall boost in national knowledge by providing those with lower levels of education the opportunity to get a job and continue their learning.

During this time around 800 000 persons have raised their educational level to an average level corresponding to a one year upper secondary level.

An important objective of the Adult Education Initiative was to promote a better co-operation and division of labour between actors at the local level. This is not only important from a 'top-down' point of view where the most efficient use of existing resources must be a priority, but also from a 'bottom-up' point of view where transparent as well as coherent provisions are crucial, for individuals as well as enterprises.

The AEI also led to a development of distribution of adult learning. The distribution of education has shifted from being steered by supply of education to be steered by demand of learning.

Innovations

The five-year Adult Education Initiative (AEI)

The five-year Adult Education Initiative (see encl U99.001 January 1999), which started in 1997, was the largest ever investment in adult education in Sweden. The initiative has had four vital perspectives – the renewal of labour market and education policies, more equitable distribution and increased economic growth. The initiative has mainly applied to municipal adult education, but folk high schools have also been affected. During the years of the Adult Education Initiative, the Government annually financed an average of 100,000 places in municipal adult education and 10,000 places at folk high schools. In addition the municipalities have used their own funds to finance some 37,000 places per year. The Adult Education Initiative has primarily been targeted at unemployed people who completely or partly lack three-year upper secondary school qualifications. The aim was to provide those in greatest need with an opportunity to gain new skills and knowledge. The Adult Education Initiative was concluded as a specific project at the turn of the year 2002/2003. As from 1 January 2003, special government funding corresponding to just over 46,000 full-time admission places is granted to municipal adult education and 7 000 to the folk high schools.

Advanced vocational education

In 1996 a pilot scheme for advanced post-upper secondary vocational education was launched, primarily with the aim of providing new skills on demand on the labour market. The scheme was largely organised in cooperation with companies and representatives of working life.

Society's investments in adult education have served as an important tool in achieving greater social and gender equality. Methods that have been used to promote adult education in Sweden have included the drafting of overall objectives for adult education supported by social funding, the legal regulation of adults' right to education and the obligations of providers, comprehensive financial support to municipalities and other providers of education and a generous system of financial study support for adults.

A strategy for adult learning

In its bill on adult learning in 2001 (fact sheet incl), the Government has set out a strategy for central and local government-financed support for adult learning based on the needs of the individual. The focus shifts from education in more school-like forms to a more flexible support for individual learning. In order to achieve learning objectives within reasonable time, it is crucial that the individual is able to study at different levels and in different subject areas at the same time. The use of modern technology to support learning and to disseminate knowledge is an important aspect of the infrastructure for lifelong learning as it helps to reach entire target groups and to further develop teaching methods. Outreach activities, guidance, validation, accessibility and financial study support may be said to constitute the cornerstone of an infrastructure for lifelong learning.

In order to be able to carry on learning continuously, it must be possible for the individual to depart from his actual skills and knowledge. There is clearly a need to make the most of and recognise knowledge, irrespective of how it has been acquired, and it is important that it is possible to validate people's actual knowledge and professional skills. Validation is an important issue in the context of lifelong learning and validation practices have been developed by a number of municipalities as part of the Adult Education Initiative. The value of high quality guidance also increases and becomes more important in a knowledge-based society, not least, so as to counteract greater education gaps in society. Guidance is about actively supporting the individual to enable him to analyse and formulate his interests and needs so as to gradually identify a target for his studies and/or profession and to find different ways of meeting this target.

The municipalities play an important role as providers of education but they should also develop their role as coordinators of information initiatives, guidance and study opportunities. This could be done by creating forms for cooperation and coordination between municipal authorities, central government authorities and institutions, providers of liberal education, education and consulting companies, the social partners, handicap organisations and other affected actors.

Its realisation is dependent on the individual, how motivated he is and his ability to search for and make the most of opportunities in the sea of learning. The state and the municipalities are responsible for providing good conditions and opportunities. A system for lifelong learning presupposes flexible educational alternatives and that the individual is aware of the different possibilities and of the requirements for various educational programmes. Lifelong learning requires coordination, a well-developed infrastructure for flexible learning and a coherent national strategy. There is a limit as to how far this rationalistic planning approach can go; lifelong learning cannot be implemented from above, and it can hardly be controlled. Instead, the responsibility of the state involves creating the conditions and incentives for individuals, companies and public actors to invest in education and learning. The point of departure must always be the individual and that the individual is given proper opportunities for further education at all stages of his life. This view necessitates study guidance, individual study plans and a diversity of educational environments. It is the responsibilities of society to create these conditions and to make efforts to reach individuals who do not themselves take the initiative to study.

Study financial support is granted for studies in municipal national adult education or other studies at the upper-secondary level and at folk high school, from the second six-month period of the year of a person's 20th birthday. Study assistance cannot generally be awarded after the year of the student's 50th birthday. Study assistance may be awarded to persons over 50 only for vocationally oriented studies in areas in which there is a shortage of labour.

Right of leave

Everyone who has been employed for at least six consecutive months or total of at least 12 months during the last two years has the right to leave of absence to study, although it is not an absolute right to leave absence at the specific time requested.

The employer has the right to postpone giving a leave of absence for a maximum of six months. There is, according to the law, no requirement that the education should be professionally oriented towards the employee's job. Also, those who wish to prepare themselves for a new occupation have the right to leave of absence. However, it is not permissible to use this as a means of pursuing what might be described as a "hobby".

Employees themselves determine whether the studies should be fulltime or part-time and whether the studies should be open-ended or concluded by a specific point in time. In the legislation there is no limit to how long leave of absence may be. How studies are organised and thus the leave of absence required is up to the employee to determine.

When the employee returns to work after leave of absence, he/she has the right to the same or equivalent working and employment conditions as before. The

employee always has the right to return to work as soon as the leave of absence is over.

Increasing Investment in Adult Learning

As said in the previous chapter Sweden invests a large amount of the GDP in adult learning. It is important that the investment is seen as cooperation between the state, the labour market and the individual.

Participation

Municipal adult education

In 2001/2002 there were approximately 287,584 students in municipal adult education. The overwhelming majority of these, 238,683 took part in upper secondary studies, whilst 41,453 were enrolled in basic adult education and 7,448 in supplementary education.

Adult education is the equivalent of upper secondary school for young people, but the two are not identical. Municipal adult education is made up of courses and the courses in the different subjects follow on from each other. The adult student qualifications must be adequately supplemented to raise them to the same level as those of young persons. However, the courses provided may differ from those in regular upper secondary school as regards emphasis, content and scope.

The students themselves determine the number and combination of subjects to be taken and the rate of progress. Many students take only one or two courses. Although a student may obtain an adult upper secondary school leaving certificate if he or she completes all core subjects and reaches a certain amount of points.

The average student in municipal adult education participates in five courses per year

The most common courses were upper secondary computer studies (86,524 participants), upper secondary mathematics (71,241 participants), upper secondary Swedish (51,113 participants) and upper secondary English (62,498 participants). 65 per cent of the students were women and 26 per cent were born abroad. The number of students with a foreign background was highest in basic adult education (66.1 per cent).

Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning (CFL)

In 2002 the CFL had 22,954 students. Almost all of them studied at upper secondary level. About 57 per cent of them were women.

Swedish tuition for immigrants

In 2001/2002 there were 39,978 participants in Swedish tuition for immigrants. Of these 33 per cent were refugees, 6 per cent were applying for a permit and the rest were immigrants. About 60 per cent of them were women.

Municipal education for adults with learning disabilities

There were 4,436 students in this type of education in school year 2000/2001. 2,034 studied at compulsory level, 1,526 at training school level and the remaining 876 at upper secondary school level. The average number of pupils per group was 2 and students had on the average 2.5 teaching hours per week. 2.5 of the pupils were women. The average age of the students was 37.

Folk High Schools

There are 147 folk high schools in Sweden. The majority of these (98) are steered by various popular movements such as temperance organisations, church societies and labour organisations.

During spring 2002 approximately 108,000 persons took part in folk high school courses, and 110,000 during the autumn. Approximately 25 per cent attend long courses (one semester to one or several years). On the longer courses, the proportion of women was 65 per cent and on the shorter courses 57 per cent.

Adult Education Associations

In 2002 the number of study circles was 316,843 and the number of participants is estimated at between 1.5 and 2 million individuals (almost 2.6 million if participation in each circle is included). About 58 per cent of the participants were women.

The number of cultural programs in 2002 was around 214,762 with about 15,590,484 participants. A cultural program can be a theatre show, a music performance or an art exhibit.

Increasing participation

Introduction

The providers of education also provide different types of courses. Sometimes the aim is to increase the level of education in society but many times the aim is to broaden cultural interest in society.

Around 40 per cent of the adult population takes part in some form of adult education. The number is very high with international standards.

However, women are more active than men in the different forms of adult education. Around two thirds of the participants in municipal adult education are women. Men is therefore one of the target groups for adult education.

There is also a need to raise the educational level among immigrants to raise their possibilities on the labour market. One important innovation in this respect is the possibility to get ones skills and competencies validated.

Motivation, participation and accessibility

About 100 000 full time-studying persons were studying in municipal adult education and training in 2002. The average age of the students is 34 years. About two third of the adult students are females. Most of the full-time students are unemployed.

The 147 folk high schools have yearly around 150 000 students in their shorter courses and 40 000 in their longer. The ten study associations yearly conduct 350 000 study circles, an education form where the participants initiate and organise their own study group with the support of a study association. It is estimated that every fifth citizen in Sweden take part in a study circle each year and that 75 per cent take part at some stage during their life. Students taking part in shorter courses in for example Liberal adult education are very often employed.

Adult learners week

In order to motivate new groups of adults for studies an Adult Learners Week have been arranged once a year during the past three years. Most activities like exhibitions, seminars and guidance have taken place on local and regional level with national support and responsibility this year by the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company (UR) in cooperation with the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science.

Active citizenship

Nordic Council of Ministers has launched a project in 2001 to reinforce active citizenship. All the five Nordic countries participated. The result of this project was produced material, like pamphlets, brochures and posters, intending to motivate people to adult learning. This material was delivered to municipalities of all the Nordic countries in connection with their Adult Learners' Week.

Research Studies in the field of Adult learning

A parliamentary commission

A Parliamentary Commission was established in 1995 and given the task to proposing goals for national take-off of adult education as part of a strategy for developing life long learning. During the five-year program Adult Education Initiative (AEI) the commission was responsible for co-ordinating the evaluation of the programme.

Several institutions and research centres, assigned by the commission, have monitored and researched adult education and learning during the AEI. The Commission has presented a handful reports were they have proposed several suggestions on how to develop adult education. The AEI has been subjected to around 50 national and local evaluations, concerning i.e. the short-term effects of the AEI, the private sector views on competence provision and how municipal adult education develops democracy.

A bill on Adult learning and the future development of Adult education (prop. 2000/01:72)

In the beginning of 2001 the government laid out a bill on the basis of the results from the Commissions various reports, the Institutions results and the experiences from the Initiative itself.

In its bill on adult learning, the Government has set out a strategy for central and local government-financed support for adult learning based on the needs of the individual. The focus shifts from education in more school-like forms to a more flexible support for individual learning. In order to achieve learning objectives within reasonable time, it is crucial that the individual is able to study at different levels and in different subject areas at the same time. The use of modern technology to support learning and to disseminate knowledge is an important aspect of the infrastructure for lifelong learning as it helps to reach entire target groups and to further develop teaching methods. Outreach activities, guidance, validation, accessibility and financial study support may be said to constitute the cornerstone of an infrastructure for lifelong learning.

In order to be able to carry on learning continuously, it must be possible for the individual to depart from his actual skills and knowledge. There is clearly a need to make the most of and recognise knowledge, irrespective of how it has been acquired, and it is important that it is possible to validate people's actual knowledge and professional skills. Validation is an important issue in the context of lifelong learning and validation practices have been developed by a number of municipalities as part of the Adult Education Initiative. The value of high quality guidance also increases and becomes more important in a knowledge-based

society, not least, so as to counteract greater education gaps in society. Guidance is about actively supporting the individual to enable him to analyse and formulate his interests and needs so as to gradually identify a target for his studies and/or profession and to find different ways of meeting this target.

A national centre for lifelong learning (Encell)

In 2001 the government granted the School of Education and Communication in Jönköping with the task of developing, over a three-year period, a competence centre for adult learning named Encell (National Centre for Lifelong Learning). According to the government bill (2000/01:72), Encell is to have "nation-wide responsibility for and be a hub for cooperation, innovation, development and dissemination of knowledge about lifelong learning."

The purpose of Encell is thus to be a joining and driving force and a source of knowledge for the development of adult learning. Encell has four task areas:

- to function as a broker - to join together various players involved with adult learning on the national and eventually the international level. Encell should also stimulate cooperation and be a link between regions and the professional and educational sectors
- have nation-wide responsibility for monitoring the surrounding world and actively work for the gathering and dissemination of findings and experiences based on both Swedish and international research on adult learning
- function as a driving and innovative force that can stimulate the development of adult education working methods and strive to put into practice and test interesting and creative projects from strategically chosen areas for adult learning
- conduct operational research within the area of adult learning in order to contribute to the long-term development of knowledge

Encell mainly targets those who actively work with adult learning and competence development, but those who are interested in adult learning make up a target group as well.

Encell is built up around a virtual centre where broad and life-long learning plays a central part and where equal attention is paid to informal and work related learning as is normally paid to formal education. The centre will initially cover knowledge and competence concerning the adult learning that begins after high school.

The aim is to have established a natural source of knowledge for adult learning after three years, which rests on cooperation primarily between Encell and the various national players. Cooperation with regional and local players within the area of adult learning is also of importance. Cooperation occurs through a dialogue with the players in which important issues are investigated for further collaboration. An additional purpose of this dialogue is to create interest among

the actors to actively work for the development and operation of the centre. The long-term goal of an on-going dialogue is to create incentives for developing joint research and development projects. Working towards this goal entails joint efforts with other universities and colleagues within the research area of adult learning.

Encell focuses on different thematic areas that are decided in conjunction with interested parties. These areas may vary over time, but initially they will centre on the following themes:

- the concept of life-long learning
- validation of competence
- factors which motivate life-long learning
- future competence demands
- learning environments and institutions for people with disabilities and the opportunity and right to life-long learning
- e-learning as a part of life-long learning
- the role of the university in life-long learning

One way that Encell can bring together formal, non-formal and even informal knowledge is to initiate the creation of different meeting places where people from adult and community education and the various representatives from the business world can discuss the different thematic areas. This should occur on both the local and the regional level. Encell also plans seminars in which research for adult learning is isolated and discussed on a more academic level.

Adult Educators/Facilitators' Status and Training

Teachers' training

Teacher education constitutes a large part of education at universities and university colleges.

Teacher employability

To be permanently appointed as a teacher in the national school system, an applicant has to have a university diploma in teaching, knowledge of the Swedish language as well as an appreciation of the regulations applicable to the school system, in particular the regulations concerning goals of education. The applicant should also have undergone a teacher-training programme in Sweden, the main contents of which focus on the type of teaching the position involves, or equivalent training from another Nordic country or a country that is a member of EFTA or the EU. If the applicant has undergone a course in higher education other than those referred to earlier, the National Agency for Higher Education shall determine whether it fulfils the necessary conditions for competence. Upper secondary schools should try to appoint teachers with post-graduate education.

An applicant not fulfilling the above conditions may be employed for a maximum of 12 months at a time, unless there are special reasons to the contrary.

The municipality formally employs teachers and pre-school teachers in Sweden. However, decisions on employment for individual staff are taken at school level. The school itself employs staffs at independent schools or pre-schools

In the school area there is no national regulation of teachers' career opportunities, even though this is an area, which is the subject of different activities from both employers and employees. The opportunities for the promotion of teaching staff in the higher education sector are regulated in the Higher Education Ordinance.

Career prospects for teachers in the school area are today relatively limited. Being a school head is a very different job from being a pre-school teacher or teacher. There are no national rules governing this.

The Ministry of Education and Science took the initiative in arranging a meeting with representatives of teachers and school heads, employers, the National Agency for Education and a number of university colleges to discuss developmental opportunities for teachers and how recruitment to the teaching profession could be improved. The work has resulted in a report with proposals for measures to strengthen quality in their activities and make the teaching profession more attractive.

All municipalities have been invited to take part in the project “Attractive schools”. Behind the initiative are the Ministry of Education and Science, the two teacher's unions, the union for school heads and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities. The goals of the project are to create organisations that support development and quality work in the school, find new development and career opportunities for teachers and also promote school development through co-operation with higher education and working life. This knowledge and the experiences generated by the project should be disseminated as well as ways of exchanging experiences between schools. 33 municipalities participate in the project that will take place over a five-year period starting in 2001. Special funds have been set aside to increase recruitment to teacher education, especially in mathematics, natural sciences, and technology to provide a special teacher education programme which combines half-time studies with half-time teaching. Those applying to the program shall have education from earlier academic studies such that a maximum of 60 credits is needed to achieve a teaching qualification. The initiative is also addressed to those who have a teaching qualification, but wish to broaden this. During their education, students should be employed in a school. Approximately 1 600 students started their education during 2002 within the framework of the initiative.

Teachers within the municipal adult education have the same initial training as all others. During their studies they have the possibility to choose courses oriented towards adult learning. Teachers already active but lacking pedagogical knowledge of adult learning have the opportunity to attend university courses both in traditional ways and as distance learning.

Statistics on teachers

Salaries

Average monthly salaries according to Statistics Sweden all amounts in SEK.

	Female	Men
Compulsory school teachers	20 400	20 300
Upper Secondary teacher	21 600	21 900
Teachers for Swedish for Immigrants	22 100	25 200

Note: There isn't any clear statistics on adult educators since they often teach both young people and adults. We have therefore shown average salaries for the above groups.

The number of teachers

Municipal adult education

The number of teachers in 2001/2002 (full-time members of staff) was 6,687. This rounds up to approximately 4 teachers per 100 students.

Swedish for immigrants

The number of teachers (full-time members of staff) was 1,493.

Municipal education for adults with learning disabilities

The number of teachers (full-time members of staff) was 349.

Folk high schools

There is around 2 400 teachers employed by the Folk high schools.

Innovations

Over the period 1999-2002 the Government allocated 1,5 billion for a nationwide programme for ICT in schools aimed at equipping Swedish schools to meet present-day and future challenges. This programme, called ITIS (IT In Schools) focused on developing teachers' ICT skills, ensuring their computer access, speeding up schools' Internet connections, giving every pupil a personal e-mail address and using ICT as a pedagogical tool in education. From year 2000 teachers of Municipal adult education and later on also teachers of Liberal adult education were included in the ICT programme.

Even though the ITIS-programme is now finished the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement will follow up the effects of this investment.

Empowering Adult Learners

Introduction

The Swedish system for adult learning exists in many different forms and is organised by many different operators, from national and municipal adult education, to labour market training, in-service training and skills enhancement in the workplace.

For the individual the public system is free of charge. The individual is also eligible for a study grant, which should provide for the individuals costs of living etc.

Flexible learning and ICT

The discussion on diversity and flexibility of learning modes and methods points towards the issue of quality of teaching, training and learning. Quality issues and strategies can thus not be separated from the issues of local and institutional autonomy, but are promoted as integral parts of decentralisation strive. The experiences from the Adult Education Initiative are positive in this sense, showing that the local level, given the right conditions, is willing and able to pursue quality development and assurance. The overall success will depend on the balance between local and central level, not least the interrelation between goals formulated at central level and the room these leave for local governance.

The requirement of meeting the participants' highly varied education needs, in terms of orientation, scope and arrangement in time and space, constitutes a starting point for the development work currently under way, in the form of the Adult Education Initiative and other measures. In the long term, it is a matter of shaping adult education into part of local infrastructure for lifelong learning. To this end, ICT offers important instruments. Only by using ICT it is feasible to offer, at a reasonable cost, virtually individualised courses, or courses adapted to small groups, at the time and in the locations where participants need them.

Learning and study centres and workplace training will play an increasingly important role in adult education. The boundary between more traditional courses provided in schools, on the one hand, and open and distance learning on the other is set to dissolve.

The Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning is a new authority established in January 2002. The main objective of this agency is to promote the development of distance and flexible learning in municipal adult education as well as in liberal adult education all over Sweden.

Local learning centres

During the last few years a lot of smaller or bigger local learning centres have been established all over the country. This enables flexible studies. An individual employee wanting to study a certain subject should be able to do this without having to leave his or her job. An enterprise should, in the same manner, be able to pursue staff updating and training without major disruptions in ordinary activities. The centre underlines the importance of IT-supported learning for achieving these flexibility gains. Another important aim of the centre is to mobilise local knowledge and competence resources. While on the one hand saving costs, using local resources is a way of establishing and strengthening local learning-networks.

Student financial support

One of the cornerstones of Swedish educational policy is that every person who wishes to attend an education should be able to do so without regards of social, economic or geographical background. Hence virtually all state or state subsidised education is free of charge. The study assistance scheme is designed to further the objectives of the government educational policy. By a generous study assistance scheme the economic obstacles for the individual will be reduced.

The scheme is general, thus everybody who is over 20 years of age and accepted for higher or adult education is eligible, and does not take in account the financial situation of the student's parents, spouse or cohabitant only the student's income can affect the amount of the grant. The study assistance cannot generally be awarded after the year of the student's 50th birthday. Although study assistance may be awarded to persons over 50 only for vocationally oriented studies in areas in which there is a shortage of labour. Entitlement to loans is reduced as of the year of the student's 41st birthday.

The study assistance consists of two components – a student grant and a loan (normally 35 percent grant and 65 percent loan). The amount given is 572 SEK per week (grant) and 1091 SEK (loan) per week of fulltime studies.

To get full study assistance the student must study at full time and reach certain study results. However it is possible to get a reduced amount for part-time and half time studies.

The study assistance can be given for a maximum of 240 weeks at post-secondary level, 120 weeks at upper-secondary level and 80 weeks at compulsory level.

The individual starts repaying his or hers loan six months after he or she last received any form of study grant. The loan is an annuity loan, which is repaid, in yearly installments for a period of 25 years or until the age of 60. The loan is subjected to a rate of interest, which is not deductible against taxes, decided each year by the government.

Extra grant

An extra grant is available for those over 25 years of age and attending municipal adult education that is not a supplementary or continuation course, studying at folk high school at compulsory or upper secondary level, studying at post secondary level which will lead to a vocational degree or studying certain remedial teaching courses.

The higher grant is awarded as long as the governments allocated funds last and in the order in which the applications have reached the National board of student aid (CSN).

The idea with the grant is to diminish the obstacles an adult can have when it comes to attend education.

Special recruitment grants

Even though the Swedish study grants system is very generous there are people, young and adult, who hesitate to participate in education. Many people can have a resistance when it comes to loan money for ones education. They might feel that the outcomes of an education are not sufficient enough to attend an education. They might also have a short previous education and thus need some introduction before they can attend an education.

In order to include those who is in most need of education a new recruitment-oriented grant for studies was introduced 1st of January 2003. The aim of this support is to promote those who are in most need of education with greater motivation to study. A general objective of the grant is to strengthen the individual's position on the labour market, to promote his/her personal development and to encourage active citizenship. A recruitment grant may be awarded from the year of student's 25th birthday until the year in which he/she reaches 50. The grant may only be awarded to persons with relatively little previous education and who are either unemployed, at risk of becoming unemployed or have functional disabilities and because of this need extra time to achieve educational targets. Local authorities are responsible for examining those eligible for the grant. For those to whom this grant may be applicable, the incurring of debts within the ordinary study support system is not a realistic option.

Validation: assessment and recognition of competencies

Adult learning is not an activity limited to formal education and training institutions. Learning at work, during leisure-time activities and in the family is increasingly being recognised as important elements in the overall reproduction and renewal of competencies. Due to the fact that non-formal learning may be difficult to detect, in some cases we talk of learning which has not been planned or not even acknowledged by the learner him/herself, high priority has been given to the development of methodologies for the identification and assessment of learning taking place outside the classroom.

As have been demonstrated in other countries, introduction of methodologies and systems for validation of non-formal learning can have an important motivational effect. Many individuals will conceive credit for prior learning as an incentive to further learning. First of all by avoiding unnecessary repetitions, secondly by demonstrating that learning can take place along different pathways, and not only through traditional, formal schooling.

A Commissioner appointed by the government in 1999, was asked to implement and evaluate three pilot projects during 2000 and propose organizational arrangements etc. for a broader pilot scheme. The Commissioner also has to consider the possibility of establishing a national validation system in Sweden. The work of the Commissioner is being carried out in consultation with the social partners, the National Agency for Education, the National Labour Market Board, the National Immigration Office, the Council on Adult Education and with various professional associations and local authorities.

So far, the main purpose of the methodologies being tested in various regions is to increase the flexibility of upper secondary school. Both at central and regional levels it is frequently repeated that the purpose of the activity is to save time and resources. Adults should not have to repeat learning sequences; schools should not waste resources on teaching adults what they already know. The strong link to upper secondary school is both strength and a weakness.

The fact that the Swedish vocational education and training system is highly modularised has played a positive role. According to those involved in the project, no major problems have yet been encountered in the application of the formal 'standards' to candidates who have acquired competencies through non-formal learning. The weakness may lie in too close a relation to the school. If non-formally acquired competencies are supposed to be similar to those developed in formal education and training, there is a certain risk that important competencies are defined as irrelevant. The challenge is to develop an assessment approach where equivalence rather than similarity is supported, thus accepting the fact that formal and non-formal learning are different and may have different, though equally valuable outcomes.

Swedish approaches to assessment and recognition of non-formal learning are not limited to these centrally initiated projects and experiments. We see a number of other assessment approaches initiated by public as well as private players. These initiatives are more focused on work-related competencies and only marginally linked to formal education and training. The Swedish IT programme (SWIT) can be looked upon as an interesting example of high volume assessment of prior and non-formal competencies. The high number of applicants, more than 80 000, emphasised the need for a high capacity assessment and selection methodology. The purpose of the methodology was to identify persons capable of completing the training in question as well as to identify persons suitable for the various IT functions. Eventually, a methodology, based on a combination of interviews and

highly formalised tests (individual numerical/logical/language skills as well as social/relational skills) was used. The formal tests were given to establish a basis for more personalised interviews aimed at the final selection of candidates.

Identification of prior and non-formal learning is indirectly demonstrated by many of the local and regional initiatives, supported by the government in the Adult Education Initiative. In the region of Gothenburg, efforts to co-ordinate guidance and counselling resources have led to the introduction of systematic mapping of an adult's experiences and abilities. While not leading to any formal recognition, the process of identifying more or less hidden competencies is seen as crucial for counselling.

Sweden has just recently started work on the development of general systems for assessment of competencies that have been acquired outside formal learning settings. The initiatives from the government together with the involvement of social partners, has led to increased attention on this issue. While the social partners are more concerned about the utilisation of competencies developed in working life (how can it be used, developed, accumulated and disseminated etc.), the interest of the government is more focused on the need to make public educational institutions more flexible (to open the system up for immigrants, for adults with long working experience, to reduce costs etc.) and that broader involvement in the setting of competence standards is secured.

A ministerial report on guidance and validation was presented during the spring 2003.

Rights of learners

The learners have extensive rights. All of the public education is free of charge.

Basic education for adults corresponds to the regular 9-year compulsory school. The education shall give adult students the basic skills necessary to live and work in the community, and prepares them for further study. The level at which studies begin is determined by the prerequisites of each participant. Studies are considered complete when the objective of the individual program has been reached. Participants may choose the rate of study themselves, enabling them to combine studies with work or practical work experience.

Basic adult education studies can lead to a level corresponding to the 9-year compulsory education. *Compulsory school equivalence* for adults is a final grade (leaving certificate) with a passing grade in the four core subjects: Swedish (or Swedish as a Second language), English, Mathematics and Social Studies. Grades for other courses may also be included in the leaving certificate. The municipality has an obligation to provide basic education for adults lacking compulsory school equivalence. The education is free of charge for the individual. The individual can also get a study grant during his or hers studies.

Visiting activities

It is important to supplement the information and marketing on the importance of adult learning with visiting activities. To a lot of adults there is a giant step to start studying. Many may feel less motivated and do not have enough information of the importance of life long learning. The municipalities are obliged to locate and motivate those adults without an education corresponding to a nine-year compulsory school. It is however hard for the municipalities to find these people and in many municipalities this work has been supported by the local labour organisations.

In several municipalities the labour office work in close cooperation with labour organisations and other NGOs to reach those with a low educational level. This has been a very successful activity and the Government has supported the central labour organisations and other NGOs by allocating money (50 million SEK per year).

Statistics

An International survey, IALS, puts Sweden at the top of the countries surveyed when it comes to participation of members of the population between the ages of 25-64 in adult education.

According to the OECD definition of literacy Sweden is one of the countries with the highest literacy rate of the OECD countries.

Quality assessment, participation and evaluation strategies

On the 1st of March 2003 the former National Agency for Education was divided into two new authorities, i.e. the Swedish National Agency for Education and the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement.

The duty of the Swedish National Agency for Education is to work actively to ensure that national objectives for the whole school system, including municipal adult education, are achieved. In order to gain insight into the various activities, the National Agency for Education carries out follow-ups, evaluation, and supervisory work.

The task of the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement is to gain insight into the various activities and to contribute to development and improvement of the whole Swedish school system, including municipal adult education.

Reporting systems and statistical sources

The Swedish National Agency for Education regularly collects data from the municipalities relating to schools including municipal adult education, thus gaining fundamental knowledge of how they function. Information is collated each year

relating to how activities are organised, how much they cost and the results that are being achieved. Follow-ups form the basis for official statistics relating to adult education. Follow-up information provides the basis for comparisons, provokes questions and stimulates debate and discussion. In-depth studies are carried out in order to give a more finely balanced view.

Examples of Best Practice and Innovations

The Adult Education Initiative

The five-year Adult Education Initiative, which started in 1997, is the largest investment in adult education ever undertaken in Sweden. The initiative had four vital perspectives – the renewal of labour market and education policies, more equitable distribution and increased economic growth. The initiative did mainly apply to municipal adult education, but did also affect folk high schools. All municipalities in Sweden are taking part in the project. During the years of the Adult Education Initiative, the Government annually financed an average of 100,000 places in municipal adult education and 10,000 places at folk high schools. In addition the municipalities used their own funds to finance some 37,000 places per year. The Adult Education Initiative was primarily targeted at unemployed people who completely or partly lack three-year upper secondary school qualifications. The aim was to provide those in greatest need with an opportunity to gain new skills and knowledge. About one third of the municipalities used validation as a tool and almost two thirds of the municipalities were conducting developing work in this area. Most of the validation was done within the health sector, followed by general subjects and ICT.

The Adult Education Initiative was concluded as a specific project at the turn of 2002/2003. As from 1 January 2003, special government funding corresponding to just over 46,000 full-time admission places is granted to municipal adult education and 7,000 to the folk high schools.

Advanced Vocational Education

Advanced Vocational Education (AVE), was carried out as a pilot project during the period 1996–2001. Since 2002 the initiative has been part of the regular educational system in Sweden.

AVE is a post-secondary education and training initiative in which one third of the time is spent in the advanced application of theoretical knowledge at a workplace, meaning active workplace learning and problem solving in a broader educational context.

Courses are based on close cooperation between enterprises and various course providers, such as universities and colleges, upper secondary schools, municipal adult education services and private companies. The courses are intended to meet real needs in the labour market. They are open both to individuals coming directly from upper secondary school and to people who are already gainfully employed and wish to develop their skills within a defined area. A completed programme of upper secondary education, general or vocational, or equivalent knowledge is required for admission to courses

The scheme serves the overall goal of promoting economic growth and employment. It aims to meet emerging needs for enhanced vocational skills in industry and commerce and to provide tertiary education to individuals who do not see traditional academic education as their first option.

Evaluations show that a very large proportion of students find employment. In 2002 about 82% had a job after finishing a programme. Around 37% of all those admitted have an educational background in a vocationally oriented upper secondary school programme, a figure that represents a slight increase over the period 1996–2000. The proportion admitted without a complete upper secondary education also shows an increase over the period, from 16% to about 22%. This group includes individuals who have received an equivalent education through an adult education service. The percentage of participants admitted after taking a theoretically oriented programme at upper secondary school decreased from 42% to about 37%.

Validation

The Commission on Validation initiated pilot projects starting 2000 with the main purpose to validate foreign vocational competencies. About 400 validations have been made and a final report has been delivered in December 2002. The results show that validation benefits the possibilities for immigrants to be employed. Co-operation between employers and employees has been established to elaborate criteria for validation of competence. In most cases validation has been carried out on a workplace.

Two main models have been identified – one where the competence of an individual is made formal and another where the formal competence of an individual is recognized as corresponding to a certain level. In the first case validation often form a part of training. In the second case the role of validation is more independent and are often more time-consuming and workplace based. In both cases the validation is recognition in relation to certain formal demands formulated by education providers or social partners (mainly employers representatives) at sector level. One typical attribute of the validation process is the careful mapping of the competence of the individual and another the connection to a workplace.

Future Actions and Concrete Targets for 2009

The goal of the Swedish educational policy is to realise the strategy and goals set out in the Bill on Adult learning (prop. 2000/01:72).

In the knowledge society the importance of learning cannot be neglected. It is therefore of uttermost importance that all adults is given the opportunity to broaden and deepen their knowledge and skills. It is important for personal development, equality of opportunity, economic and sustainable growth, democracy and employment. It is also important for an equitable distribution of wealth.

To achieve these goals the Government has set out a number of strategies that must be fulfilled.

Teaching and working methods

The knowledge-based society is growing in a rapid speed. It is therefore important that the educational system is changing correspondingly to the society. It is therefore important that the teaching and working methods is developed corresponding to the individual's constantly changing and increasing need to learn.

In this respect it is important with a specific adult learner education. It is also crucial to use new technology to promote learning.

Guidance counselling and validation

In lifelong and life wide learning, there is a growing need for counselling of high quality. A commission with the task of identifying and analysing the needs of individuals for counselling in the school system presented a report on Career Counselling in June 2001. The report was used when the government presented its proposals on counselling in a Ministerial Communication (Ds. 2002:23). The communication outlines proposals to enhance the accessibility to guidance resources. It also points out the need to develop instruments to follow up and evaluate the guidance activity to assure its quality. An Internet based information system is proposed to provide for the great demand of well-structured information about educational and labour market.

Learning environments

Learning environments has to be developed to meet the individual needs. It is important that the learning environment is suited according to the individual needs and demands instead of the opposite. It is also important to assist the individual learning and knowledge acquisition through counselling and guidance based on recognition of actual, previously acquired knowledge and skills. It is important to recognise all sorts of learning, formal, in formal and non-formal in this respect.

It is also important to develop new methods of distribution of learning. Appropriate learning environments, teaching and distance education must be available on a scale corresponding as far as possible to the varying learning needs and requirements of all adults. It is important that teaching and working methods are to be developed corresponding to the individual's constantly changing and increasing need to learn in a knowledge-based society.

Shared responsibility

The state determines the goals and certain development guidelines for adult education and training. The state defines the frameworks that safeguard equivalence and statutory rights. The state also provides limited funding for certain purposes. The individual organises his or her own learning with the assistance of the municipal authorities, folk high schools, study organisations, other education providers, employers, trades unions and many others, not least those participating in lifelong learning.

Society, employers and the individual have a shared responsibility for ensuring that the need of different people and groups for both and general education and specialist training are met.

Democratic perspective

Education and learning is a cornerstone in a living democratic society. With the instant and growing flow of information it will be more and more important with a critical and insightful view of the information. We can also see several anti-democratic movements growing around the world. Hostility against strangers is getting more and more common. It is therefore important that education is used to meet these movements. It is important to a society that the people living in it are concerned about the environment and the well being of the society. Education and competence development are of critical importance for fostering democracy and civic participation in society.

Cooperation between different political areas

To use the allocated resources as efficient as possible is it important to cooperate over and across political boundaries. It is important that the different actors, social partners and NGOs cooperate to facilitate the individual's learning and skills development.

Conclusion

The concrete targets for 2009 are to continue the development of adult education. The shift from education to support of learning is an important factor in this respect. It is important that the individual will get his or hers needs of learning met.

In the future the need to upgrade ones education will be of uttermost importance especially with the rapid development of technology.

The role of the state will be to create conditions for a diversity of learning forms. A structure for lifelong learning and a national strategy should support organised as well as non-organised learning situations. Development of forms of cooperation between different policy areas is of great importance in developing support for lifelong learning. Tasks within different areas vary, but the strategy is common, namely to create a coherent welfare policy that will benefit everyone. Since the boundary between working life and education is becoming blurred, different policy areas must take joint responsibility together with the Social Partners to put lifelong learning into practice.

Sweden should be a leading knowledge nation characterised by high quality and lifelong learning for growth and equity. A well-educated population is a prerequisite for welfare and prosperity as it provides the foundations for employment and growth and also for the development of a sustainable society. In terms of the individual a good education contributes to enhancing opportunities both in working life and in the life of society as a whole. Education and competence development are of critical importance for fostering democracy and civic participation in society. The fact that education throughout the national school system is free of charge for the individual in conjunction with a well-developed study support system means that many are financially able to study. Lifelong learning for all – from pre-school to higher education and adult education – is a powerful tool for achieving equality.

Appendix**Fact sheet about The Swedish School system (app. 1)****Fact sheet about Adult Education (app. 2)****Fact Sheet on the Adult education initiative (app. 3)****Fact Sheet on the Bill about Adult learning and the future development of adult education (app. 4)****Fact sheet about Study assistance (app. 5)****Fact sheet on the Bill about Adult education recruitment grants (app. 6)****Fact sheet about Central Authorities on Education (app. 7)****Fact sheet about the Teacher education (app. 8)**

Interesting web-pages for more information

The Ministry of Education and Science

<http://utbildning.regeringen.se/inenglish/index.htm>

The National School Agency

<http://www.skolverket.se/english/index.shtml>

The National Agency for School improvement

<http://www.skolutveckling.se/>

The National Agency for Student financial support

<http://www.csn.se/>

The National Agency for flexible learning

<http://www.cfl.se>

The National Agency for Advanced Vocational Education

<http://www.ky.se>

The Swedish National Council of Adult Education

<http://www.folkbildning.se/>

Statistics Sweden

<http://www.scb.se/indexeng.asp>