

A new system of teacher education

FACT SHEET

Ministry of Education and Science
Sweden

U00.023 • August 2000

The Government proposes a new, integrated system of teacher education and sharply increased resources for research and postgraduate studies connected with teacher education. The school system has undergone major changes in the past decade. Pre-schools have been given augmented pedagogical responsibilities, new school curricula have been brought in, and the upper secondary school system has been radically transformed. In the light of these changes, teachers must take on a new role, which in turn must proceed from a new type of teacher education, building on a substantially reinforced research foundation. Appropriations for research and postgraduate education in teacher education programmes are to increase year by year for three years. An important component will be the establishment of research schools in this area.

A new integrated teaching degree, worth 120 to 220 credits, is proposed, to replace eight of the present degrees. The new teaching degree is to be made up of three areas of education: a general field of education, one or more areas of emphasis, and one area of specialisation. A special body, on which both teachers and students will be represented, is to be set up at each institute of higher education and will be responsible for teacher education, associated research and postgraduate education.

Background

Sweden is being transformed into a learning society. Today learning takes place in many environments outside the school system. More people are going to need to learn new skills after their initial studies. The school system, teachers and teacher education therefore play a central role and contribute to lifelong learning.

School should provide children and pupils with a solid foundation of knowledge to stand on. School should arouse the desire to carry on learning. It should also give them a firm grounding in the values of our society, in tolerance and democracy. In school, children and pupils should grow in self-confidence and learn to take a critical approach.

The decentralisation of schools and the change to target- and result-based management played an important part in motivating the Government to order the development of a new system of teacher education. Another important factor was the criticism of the present system that had emerged in several evaluations. The present teacher education programmes were criticised for their inadequacy in placing pre-school, schools and adult education in a larger context, and for their failure to give students a chance to develop the skills connected with the social duties

and responsibility for pupil welfare that are an essential part of the teaching profession.

Teacher education is a tool by which the Government authorities can guide the qualifications that equip the teacher for the task ahead. The degree description given in the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) formulates the objectives for the educational programme and the qualitative requirements facing trainee teachers.

A new teaching degree

The Government proposes that a new teaching degree should be established to replace eight of the present eleven teaching degrees. The new teaching degree should require the completion of at least 120 but no more than 220 credits (1 credit= 1 week of study, one academic year= 40 credits). Teacher education should be restructured for this purpose.

The new educational programme is to be made up of three well-integrated areas of education:

- A general field of education, which should require 60 credits, at least 10 of which should be tied to practical experience in schools. The educational field should comprise, on the one hand, areas of knowledge that are central to the teaching profession, such as teaching,

special needs education, child and youth development, and on the other hand, interdisciplinary subject studies.

- An educational area with emphasis on a particular subject or subject areas, comprising at least 40 credits, at least 10 of which should be tied to practical experience in schools. The emphasis should correspond to subjects or subject areas that trainee teachers intend to teach and that are appropriate given, for example, the age of the pupils that student teachers intend to work with.
- A specialised educational area which should require at least 20 credits, deepening, broadening, supplementing or providing new approaches to the knowledge that students have previously acquired.

Within the framework of these three educational areas, students will be required to produce an independent degree thesis worth at least 10 credits.

People who have acquired subject qualifications in some other way and who want to teach should be given an opportunity to supplement their training in the field of general education and thereby obtain certification as a teacher.

Length of the teaching degree programme

The new teaching degree comprises a programme consisting of at least 120 credits and gives basic eligibility for postgraduate studies. Studies worth 60 credits in the general field of education in conjunction with studies in a particular subject will be a good foundation for research studies in educational science.

The different teaching qualifications will vary in length between 120 credits and 220 credits. The requirements are:

- To qualify to teach in pre-schools, pre-school classes and the first years of the compulsory school as well as school-age child care and mother tongue tuition, 140 credits.
- Higher levels of the compulsory school and upper secondary schools, 180 credits.
- Upper secondary school vocational programmes, 120 credits.
- Teaching Swedish and civics in the compulsory school will require 60 credits and at upper secondary school level 80 credits.

The option should be available to take a teaching degree with certain specific subject and qualification profiles. This applies, for example, to mother tongue teachers (formerly home language teachers). In addition to the general field of education, a degree with this profile will include a focus on teaching the mother tongue requiring 60 credits and a specialisation worth 20 credits.

Teachers of subjects specific to vocationally-oriented programmes in upper secondary school may obtain a teaching degree by taking 60 credits in higher education relevant to the vocational sphere or by acquiring other equivalent education in conjunction with relevant professional experience. The general field of education required for the new teaching degree will be needed in addition.

Teachers qualifying to teach a single subject will be unusual in the new teacher education programme. The reformed school system increasingly requires teachers to be qualified in several subject areas.

A stronger research link with increased resources

Strengthening the link to research was one of the main reasons for incorporating teacher training into higher education in 1977. Subsequent developments have not lived up to the expectations of this reinforced research link. Although more than twenty years have passed, an adequate research base in the field of teacher education has not been built up. Too few lecturers in education hold PhDs, very few students take part in research programmes and the number of teachers in schools with research qualifications is low.

The conditions for research and postgraduate education will now be significantly improved. Appropriations for research and postgraduate studies in educational science are to gradually increase from SEK 30 million to SEK 150 million over three years. Far too little of the research done on teaching and schools has been linked to teacher education. Nor has the school system benefited from this research. A closer link between research and teacher education and a greater number of teachers holding PhDs are essential for the quality of the school system.

A committee on educational science within the National Science Council

In the spring of 2000 the Government proposed that a new agency for research funding should be established, the National Science Council. One of the reasons for setting up this new organisation is to provide greater opportunities for joint action and interdisciplinary research. The bill *Om ett nytt forskningsråd för utbildningsvetenskap* emphasises that the National Science Council may be assigned special responsibilities if the Government considers there is a need to guarantee that research is carried out in areas that are of national interest.

The Government considers that it is of national interest to guarantee research and postgraduate studies in the field of teacher education and the teaching profession. Provided that the Riksdag (parliament) approves the establishment of the National Science

Council in accordance with the bill on a new organisation for research funding, a special committee on educational science will be set up within the Council.

The task of the committee on educational science will be to promote the development of research and postgraduate studies in educational science, in close association with teacher education and with direct relevance to the teaching profession. The majority of the committee's members should be researchers. The members should be appointed by the board of the Science Council.

Research and postgraduate studies which, in competition at the national level, are judged to be of high scientific quality and which are pursued in educational science networks will receive funding. Within the network, researchers and postgraduate students from different universities and university colleges in this country are to take part in and jointly develop research projects of critical importance.

Postgraduate teacher education

The proportion of lecturers in teacher education at universities and university colleges who have pursued postgraduate studies is low, as is the proportion of school teachers with PhDs. Thus, there is good reason to expand postgraduate education. The increased resources for research in educational science will therefore, among other things, be used to extend postgraduate studies linked to teacher education. Postgraduate studies should be organised in the form of research schools and be linked to the postgraduate programmes that will be established as a result of the work of the committee on educational science.

Special body to ensure an integrated teacher education programme

In order to guarantee an integrated programme for teacher education, universities and university colleges offering teacher programmes should set up a special body that has overall responsibility for both the undergraduate programme and research, and, where appropriate, postgraduate studies linked to teacher education.

Skills development for practising teachers

Teachers practising their profession should be able to take parts of the undergraduate programme when the need arises. It should be possible to offer teachers in schools studies in both the general field of education and in areas of emphasis and specialisation.

It should also be possible to link teachers in the profession to the proposed research programmes in educational science. They should be given the

opportunity to carry out development projects or postgraduate studies under the guidance of competent researchers associated with universities and university colleges. In their capacity as employers, municipalities should finance teachers' skills development.

The Education Act currently in force mentions in-service training. The Government proposes that the concept of in-service training be replaced by skills development. Skills development is a wider concept than in-service training and comprises both broader studies and in-depth studies, methods development, team work, research and development work, and development in other areas.

Special needs education

The place of special needs teaching is substantially strengthened in the reformed teacher education programme. All students will study special needs teaching within the general field of education. It should also be possible to arrange special needs teaching programmes in the areas of emphasis and specialisation. An advanced special needs teaching programme should lead to a special degree.

Gender equality

Universities and university colleges should develop trainee teachers' awareness and knowledge of the importance of gender equality issues for their future work. These questions should be included in the general field of education. Special attention should also be given to ensuring that the practical sections of their education provide trainee teachers with experience of gender equality work among children.

The National Agency for Higher Education should be commissioned to stimulate further development in this area of teacher education in order to broaden knowledge of gender equality in teaching.

The media and information technology

School should provide children with the tools for acquiring, processing and forming their own opinions about the continually increasing flow of information. Research into educational development based on the role of information technology in teaching should be stimulated. The relevant agencies will be requested to provide information on ongoing research into teaching and ICT that is of interest to teacher education and schools.

The new technology should also be used for distance education of teachers.

Planning, recruitment and admission to teacher education programmes

In order to meet the need for teachers and special needs for particular teaching qualifications in future, the Government should continue to entrust institutes of higher education with specific educational tasks.

These are set out in examination goals, that is to say goals regarding the number of teachers with a specific focus who should qualify at institutes of higher education.

Measures should be taken to ensure the broad recruitment of teachers in all teaching areas. Furthermore, it is important that Sweden has a teaching establishment that reflects the composition of the population as far as possible. Efforts to accommodate specific recruitment needs should also be made.

The universities and university colleges will be responsible for organising teacher education so as to achieve the goals set, meet demands for broad recruitment and opportunities for students to make choices during their period of study.

In order to facilitate recruitment to teacher education, students should be able to choose their course of studies as they progress through the programme. It should also be possible for students to choose a programme with a specific scope and focus at the very beginning.

Head teacher training and management training

The National Agency for Education should be entrusted with the task of renewing the content of the current head teacher training programme for the national school system, on the basis of the relevant university education. Supplementary education focusing on management should be developed.



REGERINGSKANSLIET

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Printed by Printing and Graphic Reproduction Centre, Stockholm,
August 2000 Article No. U00.023