

The paradox of democratic equality: on the modified teacher role in post-war Sweden

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In the last decade, a number of studies have been published relating the in media highlighted problems of the Swedish school to the cluster of reforms launched around 1990. It has been pointed out that, e.g., the municipalization of the school, the introduction of a management by objectives as well as an educational system structured by a voucher model, all carried out in the years around 1990, substantially have contributed to the current problems in Swedish schools.¹ As has been shown in a number of studies, the ideas permeating the reforms are not specific to the educational sector, but can be related to other societal reforms aiming at increasing decentralization as well as a further market orientation.²

A change intimately related to these transmutations is the deterioration of the status of teachers during the period, by some researchers described as a process of increasing

¹ SOU 2014:15, p. 308ff; Gustavsson, Sörlin and Vlachos, 2016, p. 127ff; Stenlås, 2009.

² Östberg and Andersson, 2013; Ringarp, 2011.

deprofessionalization.³ A hereto related phenomenon are the shifts that have taken place concerning the perception of the teacher's task; as the historian Niklas Stenlås has pointed out, this is expressed in the more general questioning of the teacher as an authority. In its place, an ideal has been developed where the advocates have “sought to replace transmission of knowledge with applicability and care”.⁴

It is against this backdrop that I here wish to highlight a number of crucial aspects of the modifications that the teacher's assignment underwent during the period 1945-2000. By dint of mobilizing the from Alasdair MacIntyre borrowed concept of “character”, as well as the concept of “the social” by Hannah Arendt, I will attempt to narrow down previously overlooked aspects of these changes. I argue that the strong pupil-centered education, of which the introduction of the voucher system was a manifestation, can be related to a successively modified definition of the teacher's task since the school commission of 1946.

The problem will be assessed by answering (i) how the idea of what teachers are expected to do has changed, and (ii) how different organizational changes can be understood as implicit shifts in the teacher's task. The purpose hereof is to illustrate how the

³ Broady, Börjesson, Bertilsson, 2009, p. 7–18; Stenlås, 2009; Stenlås, 2011; Hasselberg, 2009; Albäck Öberg, Bull, Hasselberg, Stenlås, 2016.

⁴ “[...] strävat efter att ersätta kunskapsförmedling med tillämplighet och omsorg”, Stenlås, 2009, p. 93. Compare also: SOU 2014:15, p. 349, 352. Regarding the school's changes in a “therapeutic” direction, there is today a vast amount of studies. Historically, this tradition can be traced to the 1960s in North America with psychoanalytically-inspired thinkers like sociologist Philip Rieff and later, psychologist Christopher Lasch, see above all: Rieff, 1966; Lasch, 1979. Among the more salient contemporary representatives we find: Ecclestone, 2007; Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009; Furedi, 2004; Furedi, 2009; Smeyers, Smith and Standish, 2010. For a more general social approach, inspired by the Marxist tradition, see also: Illouz, 2007. For studies especially about Sweden, see: Landahl, 2015; Irisdotter Aldenmyr, 2012.

perception of reproduction of society through pre-university education (which henceforth interchangeably bluntly will be referred to as “school”) has changed.⁵ School will here be understood as the bridge intertwining the past of a given society together with its future. The diachronic analysis of the changed role of teachers therefore aims primarily at shedding light on how school qua institution has changed. In relation to previous research, I maintain that organizational as well as content-related shifts in a mutually undergirding fashion successively have sapped the teaching profession throughout the post-war period.⁶ By implication, the theoretical concepts that I activate serve primarily to elucidate school as a political-theoretical problem out of a historical perspective.

In order to address these questions, I will use governmental reports [*Statens Offentliga Utredningar*] and bills related to the teachers training reforms in the post-war era.⁷ The former can, according to Finnish educational sociologist Hannu Simola, be characterized as authoritative texts. Their aim is to clarify and, sometimes, to influence the object of the investigation in a certain direction. Since they are usually the product of mutual adjustments between the different persons summoned to examine the problem – be they politicians or specialists – it is reasonable to assume that the most startling idiosyncrasies have been washed out. Bills on the other hand are directly governing policy texts, designed to be transformed into laws.⁸ These differences will here be of subordinated relevance; I shall rather read them, inspired by Arendt, as “frozen thoughts”, which we can thaw up in order to

⁵ As John Dewey reminds, the social fabric is not woven by itself; a society that does not work “on a massive transmission” of the core components of its culture can, regardless of how civilized it has been, “return to barbarity and cruelty”, see: Dewey, 1916, p. 3.

⁶ Ringarp, 2011; Stenlås, 2009.

⁷ More precisely six investigations and three bills.

⁸ Semola, 2000.

track social impulses in a diachronic perspective.⁹ Read as such, I understand them as the upshot of societal changes: as effects rather than causes.

This reading in combination with the relatively long timespan does not allow stronger empirical claims. Hence, rather than ascertaining how to think of educational historiography in the post-war period, my undertaking should be understood as an attempt to articulate new theoretical perspectives which, if convincing, could serve as sources of inspiration for further empirical studies. The decisive advantage of engaging with the topic in a slightly longer time perspective, is that it opens up for a more historically dynamic understanding of the changes around 1990 as well the current problems of the school.

I have chosen to fix my temporal limitation backwards to the school commission of 1946. This was the first time that the commissioners were instructed to query the issue of a specific teachers training program.¹⁰ Although the 1940s school commission was extensive and spurred the educational policy debate, it was first as a consequence of the 1946 commission that the ideas of a profound democratization were widely announced, not least due to the totalitarian experiences.¹¹ The line of demarcation of the study frontwards in time is the new teachers training bill of 1999/2000, which has been chosen due to lack of space.¹²

⁹ Arendt, 1971, p. 431.

¹⁰ 1948: 27, p. xi. Although the extensive investigation that preceded the 1946 commission will not be left completely untouched but serve as a relief.

¹¹ Östling, 2008.

¹² Notwithstanding the manifest changes in the latest wave of reforms between 2008-2011, I argue in an upcoming article that we, as to what concerns the issues here addressed, have good reasons consider these as a – in relevant respects – furthering of the dynamic here outlined, see: Wedin, 2017a.

A crucial shift that I narrow down is that teachers decreasingly was expected to *prepare* pupils for life in democratic society, and instead, to a growing extent, were expected to incorporate the latter into the democratic practices *in* school. This displacement can be understood as a partial expansion of *demos*, in which children and youths have been assigned a greater role. For the teaching assignment, this has meant that transmission of knowledge has been down-played and partly replaced by an individually adapted coaching, where pupils increasingly have been expected to learn *how to* learn (as in contrast to learning the propositional knowledge x).¹³ This change, I contend, is congenial with what in institutional research is described as a general weakening of institutions in society.¹⁴

Character

In order to clarify this shift, I activate the MacIntyrian concept of *character*. In *After Virtue*, he extricates what he considers to be the dominant trait of modern society: a normative-practical dead end because of its inability to represent itself in teleological terms.¹⁵ One of the analytical instruments that he activates to highlight this shift, is the concept of *character*.¹⁶ The character differs from social roles, such as occupational roles, family roles, sports roles, etc., in letting personality traits and role fuse. We can thus, with our different personalities, play roles in different ways: that which defines the role is determined by the institutional context. This is not the case with the character. The latter is

¹³ Which can be compared to what Thomas Ziehe describes as a general shift of the role of teachers in late modern society towards what he calls a “relationship worker”. See: Ziehe, 1993, p. 128.

¹⁴ Zijderfeld, 2000.

¹⁵ A criticism that, clearly, he is not only one to have advanced. The reason for which I have chosen MacIntyre is rather the analytical concept that he mobilizes in his argumentation. The first edition was published in 1981.

¹⁶ MacIntyre, 2016, p. 32ff. When discussing MacIntyre, it is on these pages that I draw.

expected to incarnate both a certain role and a personality; the “social and the psychological type” thus coincides with the individual who embodies the character.¹⁷ The character can hence be comprehended as a “mask” through which the central principles of a society are mediated.¹⁸ A character can in this sense be understood as a kind of ostentatious definition of dominant ideals in a given cultural sphere; similarly to how we define red by giving examples of red objects, MacIntyre argues that different communities are distinguished by their culture-specific characters.¹⁹

Constitutive features of different societies during distinct epochs can thus be concentrated by analysing which roles that in a given society can be described as characters. As an example of characters in different societies, MacIntyre maintains that Victorian England could be characterized by the Public-School Director, the Discoverer and the Engineer.²⁰ Another example is Germany during the time of Wilhelm II, which was embodied by characters such as the Prussian officer, the professor and the Social Democrat. Typical characters for late modern Western society are, MacIntyre argues, the aesthetic, the manager and the therapist. Specific for these latter characters is that they all consider the goals as externally given, and hence always focus on the means.²¹ Where the manager always sets the effectiveness of the business – regardless of what is to be done effectively – in the first place, the goal of the therapist is to turn maladjusted individuals into well-functioning.

¹⁷ MacIntyre, 2016, p. 34.

¹⁸ MacIntyre, 2016, p. 33.

¹⁹ Of which does not follow that they would express the only standards, but the dominant ones.

²⁰ A Public-School is a private boarding school with a high or very high (depending on which one applies for) status. Some of the most renowned are Eton, Winchester and Rugby.

²¹ Since the two latter clearly can be related to the school world, I have chosen to focus on these.

Now, to this catalogue of characters, I would like to add the teaching ideal that emerged in the policy documents during the post-war era. The ideal teacher that appears in and between the lines of the school policy documents shares several characteristics with what in Sweden today in an anglicized form is called a *coach*:²²

A coaching communication at all stages will enable pupils and employees to grow and increase their commitment and motivation in school. As a consequence, the joy of work will also increase. Coaching is always based on the current situation and looks forward. It is also assumed that it is the individual self who is in possession of the answers and solutions. Coaching attracts the best of you, raises awareness, detects inherent potentials, develops strengths, and enhances self-esteem. Focus is shifted from problems to opportunities and school is better equipped to handle challenges.²³

As we will see below, the teaching assignment was gradually redefined in course of the period towards the ideal outlined for school coaches above. I argue, moreover, that these transmutations of the expected task of teachers should be comprehended as an expression of a growing skepticism against institutions in general. Analyzing the teaching ideal as a character is particularly well suited since their task – qua incarnation of, speaking with Louis Althusser, the primary ideological state

²² The definition is taken from the enterprise Skolcoacherna, which offers coaches to public activities, private companies and private individuals.

²³ “En coachande kommunikation i alla led får elever och medarbetare att växa och ökar engagemanget och motivationen i skolan. Då ökar också arbetsglädjen. Coachning utgår alltid från dagens situation och blickar framåt. Man utgår också från att det är människan själv som sitter inne med svaren och lösningarna. Coachning lockar fram det bästa hos dig, ökar medvetenheten, upptäcker inneboende potential, utvecklar styrkor och stärker självkänslan. Fokus flyttas från problem till möjligheter och skolan blir bättre rustad att hantera utmaningar.”
<http://www.skolcoacherna.se/index.php/coachande-kommunikation.html>.

apparatus of society – reflects the way society both *establishes*, by dint of hereby pointing out a direction, and *reproduce* itself.²⁴

School as institution

The term institution is attributed, depending on context, different meanings. In the leading Swedish encyclopedia *Nationalencyklopedin*, the term is defined as “the name of norms and rules that structure human actions” and therefore “nearly synonymous with established convention”, regulated in form of laws as well as in form of informal practices and traditions.²⁵ Examples of such institutions are family, science and health care – each and one of them traversed by their specific logics and goals. Thus, within health care the overarching aim is to nurture and heal, whereas the family is expected to furnish a first micro community for the individual to orient, and in science it is the quest for truth that is expected to orchestrate the activity.

For the problem that I am trying narrow down, there are two other institutions that will be of particular interest: state and market.²⁶ Since the emergence of democratic society, these both have, ideally, been associated to two different logics. The state should be permeated by, and pursue a logic where the common good is put in the forefront. This is what I shall call the public logic. The market, on the other hand, is characterized by a privately-oriented logic where people – of flesh and blood or in legal form – meet to satisfy their particular interests. As a hybrid between on the one hand the public and on the other hand the private, a third

²⁴ Althusser, 1970. The distinction is inspired by the for Cornelius Castoriadis' thinking central concept pair *institué/instituant* and the dialectics between these two, see, for example, 'Pouvoir, politique, autonomie' in: Castoriadis, 1990.

²⁵ Nationalencyklopedin online, NE.se/institution (2016-10-10). In addition to this overall dimension of the term, it can of course be used in other ways, but I will use this definition as my point of departure.

²⁶ For a clarifying discussion about how both of these have characterized the school debate, see: Englund, 1993).

analytical category, inspired by Arendt, is the social.²⁷ What characterizes the social is that that which is pursued in private becomes a public affair.²⁸

However, from the fact that different institutions operate according to different rules, it would be invalid to infer that they would act independently of each other; that, for example, the market, both in theory and in practice, has its logic and science has its own, does naturally not prevent them from impinging on each other.²⁹ In recent decades, this has been manifested in Sweden as well as in all other Western countries by the fact that the market logic in a conspicuous fashion has rubbed off on other areas, not

²⁷ Which should not be confused with the very general definition of "social institutions" above. When writing "inspired", I want to emphasise that Arendt's own definition and application of the term is not coherent: her usages of the term in 'Reflections on Little Rock' (Arendt, 2005), Arendt, 1997, and, e.g. 'Crisis in Education' (Arendt, 2006), point in different directions.

²⁸ Arendt, 1997, p. 68ff. The two spheres that Arendt writes about is public and private. As the market is penetrated by an institutional logic according to which the actors are expected to look after their private interests, I have, in order to render Arendt's analytical distinction applicable, chosen to equate the market as an institutional logic with the logic applying in the private sphere. Historically, Arendt believes that this new form of publicity was developed in parallel with the rise of territorial states in the Late Middle Ages. In full, however, this new logic blossoms in connection with the emergence of modern society during the 19th century. In order to highlight certain relevant educational policy displacements during the post-war period, I will use social and public as relative concepts, i.e. as two ends on a scale, which can help us unveil new perspectives on dislocations in the educational policy.

²⁹ This should not be considered as a standpoint for either a stronger distinction of the spheres, such as the one described by Daniel Bell, or the Hegelian/Marxist totality idea. For two clarifying examples of this, both focusing on the current period, see: Bell, 1976; Jameson, 1992. For another, besides Jameson, and more recent vindication of an integrative approach, see: Fraser, 2014.

at least the scientific community and the health sector.³⁰ These distinctions are rough, but their purpose is primarily heuristic: by separating them in this artificial way we can – or so I contend – improve our understanding of policy changes over time.

The institution at center of this paper is the undergraduate educational system. In a very general sense, school aims at introducing children and young people to the world they are born into. With the expansion of the establishment of the public school in 1842, more and more tasks have successively been shifted from the family, the private teacher, the church, etc. to the school. As a typically modern institution, it has since the beginning been characterized by various institutional arrangements with their respective logics. Where school is exactly placed between the private and the public sphere is therefore an open question. Parallel with preparing students for a life among equals in a shared public sphere, it is not fully part of this sphere, as it inevitably is structured by the unequal relationship between those expected to be introduced and those who introduce.³¹ It therefore constitutes a specific space between the two other spheres.³² By showing how the difference between teachers and apprentices during the post-war period shrank, and how our understanding of this change could be furthered by activating the social as an analytical category, I will expose how this room “in-between” changed during the period.

³⁰ Ivarsson, Waldemarsson and Östberg, 2014; Andersson and Östberg, 2013; Albäck Öberg et al., 2016. On school in particular, see: Lundahl, 2002; Baggesen Klitgaard, 2007; Bunar, 2010.

³¹ This uneven relationship is justified by the fact that it is just a limited time it exists, see: Arendt, 2006, p. 191f. For the sake of clarity, it should be added that this unequal relationship holds whichever pedagogic regime that happens dominate, since it will always be planned and thought out *in advance* by the adults. For a recent attempt to revitalize Arendt’s approach to this theme, see: Bergdahl and Langmann, 2017.

³² Arendt, 2006, p. 185.

The teacher in the emerging comprehensive school

The 1946 School Committee was appointed to prepare a thorough reform of the Swedish educational system up to the upper secondary level. Although the 1940s school inquiry had hardly completed the approximately 4,000 pages of material, divided into not less than 20 reports, the newly-elected Social Democratic Government under Per Albin Hansson chose to summon a new commission. The reason was that:

[...] a comprehensive planning work for coming reforms in other areas of society has been implemented and that it seems desirable to evaluate the demands, that school will encumber on state finances. In addition, there is a strong increase in nativity, which necessitates extensive measures regarding teacher training, school building, etc., which should be integrated into a defined plan for the continued development of the educational system.³³

In addition to these practical reasons, the importance of elucidating the forthcoming educational reform “in more general terms” was stressed.³⁴ This directive should be read in light of the forces who, in particular within the Social Democratic Party, wanted to replace the actual parallel educational system – “a class society in miniature” - with *one* school enrollment for all.³⁵ With

³³ “[...] ett omfattande planläggningsarbete för kommande reformer på andra samhällsområden verkställt och att det synes önskligt att i ett sammanhang få pröva jämväl de krav, vilka skolväsendet kommer att ställa på statsfinanserna. Härtill kommer den starkt ökade nativiteten vilken nödvändiggör omfattande åtgärder beträffande lärarutbildning, skolbyggande etc., som böra inpassas i en uppgjord plan för skolväsendets fortsatta utbyggande.” SOU 1948:27, p. x.

³⁴ “[...] ur mera allmänna synpunkter”, Marklund, 1974, p. 44.

³⁵ “[...] ett klassamhälle i miniatyr”, Erlander, 1973, p. 233. However, as Petter Sandgren has emphasized, the statement needs qualifying. As the importance of the secondary grammar school in 19th century has diminished in conjunction with the emergence of the unitary school, Sandgren convincingly argues that the economic haute bourgeoisie has succeeded in maintaining a unsurpassable – *consecrated* to use Sandgren’s Bourdieu-inspired conceptual apparatus – educational privilege in form of private boarding schools with their for the vast majority of families

the democratization of society, the educational system should also be democratized; and here, the school fell short, as it “not entirely had managed to keep up with the societal development”.³⁶

In addition to reviewing the forms of school, the commission was also assigned to examine the methods of education and training. The investigators were thus instructed to overview what kind of education forthcoming teachers should be given. Bearing witness of the importance ascribed to the education of teachers, is the commissioning of a specific delegation aiming at “investigating issues in connection with the establishment of a first teachers training of education” (whereby those aspects that already had been announced by the 1946 Commission were further developed).³⁷ As part of the upbringing and transmission of knowledge, the commissioners also emphasized the importance of having teachers “developing the ability of disciples to work on their own and to plan their work”.³⁸ This new, progressive approach was considered a sharp contrast to the still prevailing methodology, which featured “a burdensome legacy of the school

unaffordable annual fees, see: Sandgren, 2015, p. 131-132. In addition, the efficiency-based arguments for a better functioning meritocratic system should be highlighted, according to which the one best suited to a given position really ends up there rather than anyone else just because the school's selection system does not work optimally, see also: Lindensjö and Lundgren, 2014, p. 57.

³⁶ “[...] inte helt kunnat hålla jämna steg med den samhälleliga utvecklingen”. SOU 1948:27, p. 1. In his memoirs, Tage Erlander argues in the same way, see: Erlander, 1973, p. 237. The employment of a new commission should be understood in light of the deep split within the previous committee, especially regarding issues related to cohesion and differentiation in a reformed educational system, see: Lindensjö and Lundgren, 2014, p. 49.

³⁷ “[...] utredning av frågor i samband med inrättandet av en första lärarhögskola”. SOU 1952:33, p. vii.

³⁸ “[...] utveckla[r] lärjungarnas förmåga att arbeta på egen hand och planlägga sitt arbete”. SOU 1948:27, p. 352.

of the Middle Ages and the former bureaucratic state school”.³⁹ As long as this “question-and-answer” method governs pupils activities, it tends to create “lack of independence, belief in authority, passivity”; the method, they claimed, is “to its internal purpose [...] authoritarian”.⁴⁰ It is therefore now, they continue, time to replace the “school of authority” with the “school of activity”.⁴¹

As the educational historian Gunnar Richardson writes, the practical prescription ordained was a working school and group work; the modern teacher should hereafter be formed into a kind of supervisor, a “*primus* in the class work community”.⁴² The idea is that pupils should be able to do a job in school that coincides with their interests, where he or she participates in the configuration of the tasks themselves. In this regard, it was considered crucial that teachers could see each individual disciple in her unique situation. These new, non-authoritarian, more democratic and individualized methods were desirable because they were thought to best be able to further the democratic landscape that successively was taking shape.

Parallel to these requests, the investigators also emphasize the importance of teachers themselves having the qualities they want to inculcate among pupils; that an aesthetic sensitivity has a “refining effect on the personality's formulation is generally” recognized.⁴³ It is therefore of importance, the investigators go on, that school take this into account to a greater extent than hitherto. However, although the importance of new methods applied in

³⁹ “[...] ett betungande arv från medeltidens och den gamla ämbetsmannastatens skola”. SOU 1948:27, p. 5.

⁴⁰ “[...] fråga och svar [...] osjälvständighet, auktoritetstro, passivitet [...] till sin inre syftning [...] auktoritär”. SOU 1948:27, p. 5.

⁴¹ “[...] auktoritetsskolan [...] aktivitetsskolan”. SOU 1948:27, p. 5, 354.

⁴² Richardson, 1983, p. 87.

⁴³ “[...] förädlade verkan på personlighetens danning är allmänt”. SOU 1948:27, p. 352.

school was emphasised, there still seem to be some fairly clear boundaries implicated for what, according to at the time prevailing standards, was considered to be good taste and not.⁴⁴ The dichotomy between the school of authority (the ancient and undemocratic) versus the activity school (the democratic and progressive) thus accommodated several dimensions. “Already Plato pronounced”, the commissioners write, “that education and teaching is the spiritual contact between two personalities, not just the transfer of information from a teacher to a disciple.”⁴⁵ In this passage another picture emerges of how the commissioners argued in their criticism of a (imagined) sterile mediating teacher.

The transmitting dimension is, as in the “traditional” school, prevalent here as well: “the teacher makes him familiar with modes of thinking”.⁴⁶ It is rather the attitude and view of what is

⁴⁴ SOU 1948:27, p. 30f.

⁴⁵ “Redan Platon uttalade, att uppfostran och undervisning är själslig kontakt mellan två personligheter, ej blott ett överbringande av upplysningar från en lärare till en lärjunge.” SOU 1948:27, p. 355. The chosen quote opens up for several possible interpretations. An association that it arouses, of which there are more in the investigation, are the clear traces of idealistic thinking that emerged at this time, but disappeared from the end of the 1940s onwards. Another possible link is Plato's own ideas about teaching, which in the form of the Maieutian method have been cherished also after Plato, in virtue of symbolising The Tradition, had been cleared out of educational policy documents. These are, however, not traces that I will pursue here. For a discussion about how German idealism crumbled away in Swedish educational policies after World War II, see: Östling, 2008.

⁴⁶ “[...] traditionella [...] läraren gör honom förtrogen med tankegångar”. SOU 1948:27, p. 27, 355. It is worth noting in parentheses how this emotionally charged way of talking about the teaching situation differs from the criticisms of emotional and / or therapeutically stressed teaching which several researchers think they can distinguish in educational systems in different states. As the intellectual historian Thomas Karlsruhn points out, it is very doubtful how fruitful it is to put emotions *against* the never-decreasing rigor of reason in the educational context. The relevant question instead, as Karlsruhn points out, concerns the question of what *kind* of emotions we want to penetrate all those active in teaching (at all

happening that is being emphasized. Teacher's influence over pupils thus occur as much in the dynamics in relation to the pupil that the teacher as a *human being* can mobilise, as via his/her's *knowledge* of the subject. Therefore, the teacher's need for at depth knowledge as well as interest in cultural issues seem to be interdependent in the report; the teacher must not, "to use Plato's words [...], feel like a retail seller of those goods, of which the soul is nourished."⁴⁷

The idea of the teacher as a supervisor in an increasingly individualized education (where pupils interests are given a greater importance) should also be understood as a strategically important part of the argumentation for the comprehensive school.⁴⁸ Without the promotion of an individualized teaching, it would have been even more difficult to convince the opponents of the comprehensive school about its practical feasibility, in particular

levels). What emotions do we want, differently expressed, to awake and encourage in those who are to be taught as well as those who shall teach? See: Karlsohn, 2016. For further discussions about emotions and education and the criticism of what some refer to as a therapeutic turn, see note 4 above.

⁴⁷ "[...] för att använda Platons ord [...] känna sig som en minuthandlare i de varor, av vilka själen har sin näring". SOU 1948:27, p. 357. Based on these carefully chosen quote, the reader can get the impression that Plato was the commissioner's main source of inspiration. However, the importance of Plato should not be exaggerated; in total, he is mentioned four times in the investigation, which all in all is 561 pages long.

⁴⁸ The comprehensive school gradually replaced the former parallel school system, where the peasants and workers' children tended to go to the seven-year primary school while the children from better-educated environments went to the secondary grammar schools (most of them were placed in the more important cities). The secondary grammar school was divided into two separate stages after the 1905 Statute of Secondary Grammar School [*Läroverksstadga*]. The lower form of junior secondary school [*Realskola*] was created for the first six years, which later, at the 1927 secondary grammar school reform, was transformed into a 4- respectively 5-year-programme. The second and higher stage was called upper secondary school [*gymnasium*] and was four years long.

regarding the purported risk of levelling that several, especially secondary grammar school teachers, warned for. Therefore, the individualized teaching was, in order to borrow Richardson's wording, a *sine qua non* for the introduction of the comprehensive school.⁴⁹ Individualization was thus expected to be pursued with the aim of allowing each pupil to work in accordance with the particular pace that her's or his' capacities allowed for.⁵⁰ As part of the endeavour to individualize teaching, the commissioners also suggested a coherent class teacher education far up in the ages (meaning until they had reached the age of 13), as this "enables better individual care of the pupils".⁵¹

Regarding the differences between the various categories of teachers, the commission wanted the "actual vocational training to be largely shared by all categories of teachers".⁵² In addition to purely practical adjustments, i.e. through the increased opportunities for teachers to retrain, I maintain that this effort should also be understood as a desire to not only formally, but also as to what regards the *content*, abolish the parallel educational system. On another ideological level, this should, furthermore, be understood as a desire to create an institutional framework for the cultivation of progressive pedagogics that educational reformers wanted to achieve; the teachers' training college should, as the investigators express it, be "hearths for progressive education".⁵³

⁴⁹ Richardson, 1983, p. 154. See also: SOU 2014:15, p. 327f.

⁵⁰ SOU 1948:23, p. 353.

⁵¹ "[...] möjliggör en bättre individuell omvårdnad om eleverna". SOU 1948:27, p. 8.

⁵² "[...] egentliga yrkesutbildningen i stor utsträckning bör göras gemensam för alla lärarkategorier". SOU 1948:27, p. 363. Compare also with the text that follows under the heading "Principle of Sharedness in the Actual Vocational Education" in the Teachers Training Commission, SOU 1952:33, p. 7ff.

⁵³ "[...] vara härdar för progressiv pedagogik". SOU 1948:27, p. 410. The formulation is then cited again in the investigation of the establishment of the country's first teachers training college, 1952:32, p. 24. The desire to

However, when the bill in which guidelines for the comprehensive school was presented, the tone was far more unobtrusive than in the report.⁵⁴ In stark contrast to the investigators' expectations, the right-wing politician Georg Andrén described it as a "progressive gliding from a dogmatic utopia to experience"; the new democratic methods advocated in the investigation came to play a much more modest role in the bill.⁵⁵ As an explanation for this displacement, Richardson points to criticism of the proposal from various evaluation instances and media as well as the increasingly acute shortage of facilities and teachers.⁵⁶

As we shall see, the lack of teachers was a reality that would characterize the educational policy debates in other respects as well during the first decades after the war. But whereas the actual reforms proved more modest than the visions here, the gap between visions and reforms – regarding the desire to democratize the school – would attenuate from the 1970s and onwards.

integrate teachers at all levels of the comprehensive school in one single school should also be related to a more general endeavour to dissolve boundaries, or isolation as the investigators formulate it, between different professional groups in society. To this subject, the commissioners return in the investigation. The endeavour to improve practical knowledge vis-à-vis theoretical is an aspect that characterizes post-war education policy. Among the more pronounced expressions, the 1977 college reform can be mentioned as well as the theory of so-called socio-cultural learning, which since the 1990s has had a huge impact on teacher education all over Sweden. For examples hereof in this investigation, see: SOU 1948:27, p. 362f. Similar arguments are also presented in the Teachers Training Commission presented shortly thereafter: see SOU 1952:32, p. 19f.

⁵⁴ Bill 1950:70.

⁵⁵ "[...] fortskridande glidflykt från en dogmatisk utopi till erfarenheten". Georg Andrén's contribution in the first chamber of 1950, no. 23, 14, quoted in Richardson, 1983, p. 174.

⁵⁶ Richardson, 1983, p. 171ff.

Towards a further democratization of the school

In 1965, the 1960 teachers training experts presented their report. Concerning the questions addressed here, the tone does not deviate considerably from the findings of the 1948 commission (nor to the hereto related Teachers Training Report of 1952). As the report was presented, it had already been agreed upon that a comprehensive school would be established. The decision was taken in unison by the parliament in 1962. The commissioners task was to “carry out investigations concerning the organization of the subject- and class teacher’s education, etc.”⁵⁷

In line with the 1948 report, the commissioners demanded that “measures were taken to bring teachers closer together”.⁵⁸ The distinctions introduced between different departments in conjunction with establishing comprehensive school, the junior-; intermediate; and senior level, were considered far too closely related to the previous structure. Not at least was this considered so with regard to the clear boundaries between class teachers (1-6) and specialist subject teachers (7th grade and upwards); “by and large”, the investigators argued, “do the current forms of school rest on a specialization ideology, which belongs more to the older than the new educational system”.⁵⁹

The comprehensive school rests on other foundations. In the limelight is the upbringing of individual pupils. This ideal, the investigators stress, rests on three fundamental principles. The first is that the development and needs of the “individual” must be the point of departure for teachers.⁶⁰ The second principle is that the

⁵⁷ [...] verkställa utredning rörande ämnes- och klasslärarutbildningens organisation m.m.”. SOU 1965:29, p. 3.

⁵⁸ [...] åtgärder vidtas för att föra även lärarna närmare varandra”. SOU 1965:29, p. 180.

⁵⁹ “[I] stora stycken vilar nuvarande utbildningsformer på en specialiseringsideologi, som mera tillhör det äldre än det nya skolsystemet”. SOU 1965:29, p. 175.

⁶⁰ SOU 1965:29, p. 170.

latter should “consider the pupil in an overall perspective”.⁶¹ The essential is thus the whole, and not how pupils perform in individual subjects or parts of subjects. The third principle that should guide the teacher’s assignment is that pupil’s “development is continuous and not at intervals with forms and stages like artificial positions of states of rest.”⁶² Together, these three principles narrow down two significant educational policy changes during the post-war era.

The first is the increased emphasis of the individual as the obvious starting point of education.⁶³ The second is a movement towards a disintegration of borders appearing in three different forms: a dissolving of borders between practical and theoretical work, between different departments (of which the distinction between class- and – subject specialist teacher is one relevant aspect), as well as the approaching between pupils and teachers. It is on the latter two that I will focus here.

The more uniform teachers training education that was sought for was an expression of the more extensive tendency to create a more democratic school. In addition to the pursuit of having class teachers approaching subject specialist teachers, this would also be reflected in the ambition to downplay differences between manual and intellectual work:

In the era of automatization, it is not as before possible to distinguish between manual and intellectual work. Likewise, it is becoming impossible to see academic disciplines and job training subjects as mutual exclusives. The job training subjects contains subject-theoretical moments, and academic subjects focus on needs of labour market, etc. Besides the above-mentioned cleavage between class teacher and subject teacher in the traditional teachers training, further cleavages must be considered, which strikes a

⁶¹ “[...] beakta *hela* eleven”. SOU 1965:29, p. 170.

⁶² “[...] utveckling är *kontinuerlig* och inte språngvis med årskurser och stadier som konstlade vilolägen”. SOU 1965:29, p. 170.

⁶³ For studies of the individualization process, see: Giota, 2013, Vinterek, 2006; Wedin, 2017b.

discordant note with school's ambition of an all-round education of the personality, namely the dualism between theoretical and non-theoretical paths, as well as an artificial division of content and teachers in theoretical subjects, practical subjects and job-training subjects.⁶⁴

The tone is on the lines of the reforms that later on were carried out also at universities with the 1977 colleges reform.⁶⁵ But, as indicated by the quote, this desire was clearly not exclusively motivated by an equality-inspired willingness to downplay differences between workers and academically educated persons: out on the labour market there are no artificial divisions between practice and theory.

Beyond the needs of the external interests and efforts made to advance equality, we glimpse the needs that the rapidly expanding educational system itself generated: "Almost all over the world, the teacher problem is one and the same: the teachers are too few and the teachers in existence have an inadequate education."⁶⁶ This is why, as Department Director Ragnar Edenman (Social Democratic Party, henceforth just "S") writes, it is of importance that the commissioners examine the question of how teachers training could be designed, so that teachers gain competence to

⁶⁴ "Det är i automationens tidevarv inte heller möjligt att som förr sårhålla kroppsarbete och tankearbete. På samma sätt blir det omöjligt att se läroämnena och yrkesämnena som helt sidoordnade. Yrkesämnena innehåller ämnesteoretiska moment, läroämnena inriktas på speciella avnämningarbehov o. s. v. Till den ovan påtalade klyvningen klasslärare-ämneslärare i den traditionella lärarutbildningen kommer sålunda andra former av kluvenhet, som inte rimmar med skolans mål om allsidig personlighetsfostran, nämligen dualismen mellan teoretiska och icke-teoretiska studievägar och en konstlad uppspaltning av lärostoff och lärare på läroämnena-övningsämnena-yrkesämnena." SOU 1965:29, p. 17.

⁶⁵ Richardson, 2010, p. 249.

⁶⁶ "Över praktiskt taget hela världen är lärarproblemet ett och detsamma: lärarna är för få och de lärare som finns har en inadekvat utbildning." SOU 1965:29, p. 15.

teach in more subjects than they currently are.⁶⁷ With regard to the role of teachers in classrooms, it did not deviate noticeably from the commission of 1946: the teacher was expected to assume the role of a supervisor as well as leaving more room for pupils to follow their interests at the same time.

Another central aspect concerned how the nature of knowledge was considered, as well as the transmission of the same. We can here discern some relevant changes of nuances between the two investigations. In the 1946 commission, the importance of inculcating a respect for “the highest values of culture” and, ultimately, “love for the studies” were emphasized.⁶⁸ At the same time, the commissioners underline, it is the responsibility of teachers to rouse an understanding for:

[...] that the cultural heritage is alive, that it is constantly developing and that they themselves have a task of contributing to the furthering of culture. This means, among other things, an insight into the relativity of school skills: as research progresses, the recognized scientific truths might eventually get in need of adjustment.⁶⁹

When the Teachers Training Commission of 1960 presented their report, the tone was somewhat different. Under the heading of “knowledge and skills” (*kunskaper och färdigheter*), the commissioners call to mind that in the new curriculum for elementary schools, *Läroplan för grundskolan 1962* (Lgr 62), it is stated that teaching shall promote pupils’ development and

⁶⁷ SOU 1965:29.

⁶⁸ “[...] kulturens högsta värden [...] kärlek till studier”. SOU 1948:27, p. 27.

⁶⁹ “[...] kulturarv är levande, att det ständigt utvecklas och att de själva har en uppgift att fylla i arbetet på kulturens vidareutveckling. Detta innebär bl. a. en insikt i skolkunskapernas relativitet: i och med att forskningen går vidare blir de en gång erkända vetenskapliga sanningarna så småningom i behov av justering. SOU 1948:27, p. 27.

“thereby communicate knowledge”.⁷⁰ The acquisition of knowledge thus appears to have become an instrument for the development of the individual. In order for the teachers to succeed in their work, it is crucial that the student “should feel” that she constantly advances and develops; “the outlook of the content of teaching has thus been relativized”.⁷¹ It is now more important that students learn to orient themselves among all new things with which they are constantly confronted in their lives than to acquire a specific content, since the latter may anyhow have “become peripheral and obsolete tomorrow”.⁷² Teaching learning techniques is therefore of “increasing importance”; something which, the commissioners add, in turn further strengthens the dissolving borders between theoretical and vocational subjects: “learning actual knowledge shall primarily aim at providing a capacity to orient”.⁷³

At the same time, immediately afterwards, there is a plea for teachers to awaken a deeper understanding for the role of aesthetics in life and to “stimulate taste and a sense of beauty” among pupils.⁷⁴ In this regard, the similarities between this report and the commission of 1946 should be clear. As stated above, we can nevertheless discern certain relevant displacements towards a relativization of the content, implying a shift of emphasis where the forms of teaching increasingly were stressed at the expense of the expected impartation of a given content. This is a shift that, as we shall see, would be further undergirded over the years.

⁷⁰ “[...] *därvid* meddela kunskaper”. Lgr 62 quoted in SOU 1965:29, p. 82.

⁷¹ “[...] kunna känna [...] synen på undervisningens innehåll har alltså relativiserats”. SOU 1965:29, p. 83.

⁷² “[...] blivit perifert och föråldrat”. SOU 1965:29, p. 83.

⁷³ “[...] ökad betydelse [...] inlärandet av aktuella kunskaper skall främst syfta till att ge färdighet i att orientera sig [...]”. SOU 1965:29, p. 84.

⁷⁴ “[...] uppöva smak och skönhetssinne”. SOU 1965:29, p. 84 and 88.

However, it should be emphasized that we find similar relativizing impulses (albeit less emphasised) already in the report of 1940. Here as well, the commissioners claimed that school was undergoing a development “which in its entirety means nothing less than a revolution”; a revolution in which the older “cram school” was replaced by the elaborative so-called working-school methods.⁷⁵ In this respect, we have good reasons to trust Gösta Bagge, the former ecclesiastical minister of the Högerpartiet (the at the time Conservative Party), and the other commissioners; given the changes regarding how the reproduction of society and the allowance of some form of continuity over time that during this period was realised throughout the educational system, it does not seem unjustified to speak of a veritable revolution.

The criticism of the “cram school”, which was articulated already by the commission in 1940, is by now a commonplace: there one does not learn for life but to pass your degree. The commissioners then haste to add that parts of this criticism are clearly excessive and sometimes based upon an inadequate knowledge of the work in school. It does, nevertheless, “usually represent experiences which, in the event of a general review of the educational system, should not be left unattended”.⁷⁶ It is the replacement of this school with a new, where the laboratory working methods are at heart of the activity, that the commissioners recognize as the revolutionary element.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ “[...] som i sin helhet innebär ingenting mindre än en revolution [...] pluggskolan”. SOU 1944:20, p. 51, 55. Cram school [*pluggskolan*] is put in quotation marks in the actual report as well.

⁷⁶ “[...] representera de dock i regel erfarenheter, som vid en allmän översyn av skolväsendet icke böra lämnas obeaktade”. SOU 1944:20, p. 52.

⁷⁷ As I write above, the commission’s approach to the method in question seems to have been limited to be precisely a method. The commissioners write on the same page that even “tests and exams are, if they are naturally inserted in a well-planned and balanced education, not harmful; in the continuing education of different courses of life, such tests often play a crucial role, and similar situations are often met out in life. School should let children be children and allow youths to enjoy their youth, but it

However, the truly subversive dimension was not, I would argue, *that* a new method was gaining ground in the public educational system; various ideas about this have come, disappeared and, in some cases, been reintroduced at least since Plato outlined his ideal in *The Republic*. The revolutionary aspect of these transmutations was rather how confidence in new methods over time contributed to what, with a somewhat incisive wording, could be defined as an inversion from content to form. Leaving the question of cause and effect aside, this should also be understood as a remarkable transformation of the ability and *willingness* of school, and thus also of the society at large, to articulate itself, where this act is to be thought of as one where reproduction and foundation are inseparable instances of one and the same act, the one not graspable without the other. This should, I maintain, be understood as a gradually growing collective unwillingness to *explicitly* articulate a direction of the current generation for the upcoming to, when their time is in and they become members of the public sphere, orient against.⁷⁸ During the 1970s, two aspects

cannot be school's task to keep youngsters from the seriousness, troubles and dangers of life. That would indeed to intentionally teach young people to bury their heads in the sand as soon as something unpleasant is imminent; if occasionally such a tendency can be traced also out in life, it is in any case not the task of school to promote the development of youngsters in this direction" (prov och examina äro, om de på ett naturligt sätt infoga sig i en väl planlagd och avvägd undervisning, i och för sig intet ont; vid den fortsatta utbildningen för olika levnadsbanor spela sådana prov ofta en avgörande roll, och situationer av liknande slag möta ofta ute i livet. Skolan skall låta barnet vara barn och låta ungdomen njuta av sin ungdom, men det kan icke vara skolans uppgift att för de ungas blickar liksom gömma undan livets allvar, mödor och faror. Det vore ju att planmässigt lära de unga att sticka huvudet i busken, så snart något obehagligt hotar; om understundom en sådan benägenhet kan spåras även ute i livet, så är det i varje fall icke skolans uppgift att främja de ungas utveckling i denna riktning)". SOU 1944:20, p. 55.

⁷⁸ This can be compared to what Marie Demker and Ulf Bjereld called an ultramodern state, where the goals towards which the progress strives is rather "formulated in the process of change itself", see: Demker and Bjereld, 2005, p. 20f. *Implicitly* this happens, of course, in spite of how the elderly choose to introduce the younger to the existing world; like the

emerge, which, as I shall argue further down, add to the fact that the “working-school method” was truly ground-breaking. The teaching paradigm that in parallel hereby took form, in virtue of its increasingly strong emphasis on forms of learning, adopted a structure that gradually more resembled the initially outlined coaching ideal; a shift away from the idea of student’s development *through* the past, to the symbolically charged idea of individual’s “inherent” potential, where the pupil’s development is increasingly related to her own self-determination.

Reproduction of Class Society

A central change in the 1970s was that the previously mentioned references to cultural heritage, cultivation of taste and suchlike, suggesting a continuing faith in the importance of introducing students to a particular content, disappeared in the 1970s.⁷⁹ As a consequence, a symbolic counterweight to the idea of the relativity of knowledge thus disappeared. This suggests a shift towards a further relativization of the content taught, based on an even more solid belief in the importance of the teaching forms; shifts that, as Richardson has pointed out, should be understood in light of the overall aim of better preparing students for a life in democratic society.⁸⁰

norm of free choice the idea of a more student-driven work is also a control strategy, a way to interpellate the recipients in question.

⁷⁹ Wedin, 2017b.

⁸⁰ Richardson, 1983, p. 87. Ringarp also emphasizes how the SIA investigation was an expression of a focus shift towards a decentralization and an increased influence for students and parents, see: Ringarp, 2011, p. 48-49. Moreover, in order to better grasp the dynamics at play here, we have good reasons to distinguish between at least two different meanings of the adjective “democratic” in this sentence: on the one hand as political regime, and on the other hand as a culturally structuring ideal of modernity in the way of which Tocqueville defines it in the second volume of *De la démocratie en Amérique*. For an analysis of his relevance for understanding the educational policy changes in the Western world in general, and Sweden in particular, during the post war period, see: Wedin, 2017a.

The second aspect implies that the pupil's *right* as a democratic subject is now increasingly evident in the educational policy documents – both in reports and bills. It is for example a clearly present idea in the report over “The inner work of school” (SOU 1974: 53).⁸¹ The aspiration to create a more democratic and equal school that permeates this investigation should be read in light of the admonitions to dedicate a particular focus on the pupils with greatest problems in school.⁸²

⁸¹ SOU 1974:53, commonly known as SIA.

⁸² The investigators write: "We have reasons to expect that a significant proportion of the pupils who end up in such a difficult school situation belong to the socially and culturally disadvantaged group. How these students can experience a sense of alienation in school has been described in an illustrative way by the English sociologist Bernstein (1970). As the school is unable to relate to the experiences of such pupils, they find that perceptions and values that were previously essential in life no longer are valid. A wedge is increasingly driven in between the student as a member of the family community and students as a member of the school community. While entering the school, he is therefore faced with the requirement to abandon his social identity. Even parents may feel inadequate when the education and experiences which pupils have accumulated at home is not beneficial in the school environment or even creates problems. This does not imply favourable conditions for the student's development and for the parents' involvement in the own child's education. In order to achieve the parent's active participation in the education process, Bernstein believes that they must be able to fully participate in their own ability to the extent that they are able to participate. This can, amongst other things, be achieved by retaining the students' experiences from home and the society outside school. "(Det finns anledning att räkna med att en betydande del av de elever som på detta sätt hamnar i en besvärligare skolsituation tillhör gruppen socialt och kulturellt missgynnade. Hur dessa elever kan uppleva en känsla av främlingskap i skolan har på ett belysande sätt beskrivits av den engelske sociologen Bernstein (1970). Genom att skolan inte förmår anknyta till sådana elevers erfarenhetsvärld, finner dessa att uppfattningar och värderingar som tidigare varit väsentliga i tillvaron inte längre äger giltighet. En kil drivs alltmer in mellan eleven som medlem i familjesamhället och elever som medlem i skolans gemenskap. Vid inträdet i skolan ställs han med andra ord inför kravet att överge sin sociala identitet. Även föräldrarna kan känna otillräcklighet när den fostran och

In the directives we read that:

Among the tasks of school is not only the transmission of knowledge but also, and equally important, to give pupils an opportunity to evolve into an independent citizen with personal involvement in the surrounding world. These opportunities must not be divested from a pupil because he has difficulties in school. School has, on the contrary, a particular responsibility for these pupils, as these years is a perhaps never-repeated opportunity to give them the opportunities for personal and social development that society is responsible to offer its citizens.⁸³

By adapting teaching to the varying horizons of reality of different pupils, school could become better at receiving children from environments where other things than those which are traditionally ascribed the greatest importance in school have been encouraged. Reforms in this direction would make school more equal, as it was assumed to decrease the advantages with which children from better of backgrounds tend to come to school.

Shortly after the 1974 report was presented, the idea was repeated in a bill based on the report, “about the internal work of the school, etc.”,⁸⁴ by the then Social Democratic government with

de erfarenheter eleven erhållit i hemmet inte är till gagn i skolmiljön eller rent av skapar problem. Detta innebär inga gynnsamma förutsättningar för elevens utveckling och för föräldrarnas engagemang i det egna barnets utbildning. För att få föräldrarna aktivt deltagande i utbildningsprocessen måste de enligt Bernstein mening ges möjlighet att med full tillit till den egna förmågan medverka i den omfattning de mäktar. Detta kan bl.a. ske genom att undervisningen bättre tillvaratar elevernas erfarenheter från hemmet och samhället utanför skolan.”). SOU 1974:53, p. 304f.

⁸³ “I skolans uppgifter ingår inte bara att förmedla kunskaper utan i lika hög grad ge eleven tillfälle att utvecklas till en självständig samhällsmedborgare med personligt engagemang i omvärlden. Dessa möjligheter får inte undandras någon elev, därför att han har svårigheter med skolarbetet. Skolan har tvärtom ett särskilt ansvar för dessa elever, då skoltiden är ett kanske aldrig återkommande tillfälle att ge dem de möjligheter till personlig och social utveckling, samhället är skyldigt att erbjuda sina medborgare.” SOU 1974:53, p. 64.

⁸⁴ “[...] om skolans inre arbete m.m.”.

Olof Palme as prime minister and Lena Hjelm-Wallén as Minister of Education:

The point of departure for the proposals is that municipalities and school units in the municipalities should be given opportunities to adapt teaching according to individual pupils or groups of pupils' needs. [...] School should more than what is presently the case strive for a way of working that relates to pupil's reality.⁸⁵

What implications did this have for teacher assignment? And how can this be understood in light of the institutional perspective that structures this paper? As emphasized above, the truly subversive aspect of the changes was the emphasis on forms at expense of content, as this meant such a radically new view on – and perception of – reproduction of society. To the three more specific forms of dissolution discerned on page 212-213, an additional, previously identifiable but now even more stressed is furthered; teachers should now, to a greater extent than earlier, approach the horizon of experiences of individual pupils.⁸⁶

This was asked for in order to especially reach those who tend to have most difficulties at school. As is evident from the quote, this idea was further strengthened by stressing the fact that teachers is to offer students better opportunities for personal and social development. This, I maintain, is an expression of a change in which the private, in terms of pupil's personal experiences and interests, increasingly was expected to characterize the school as an institutional form. In combination with the calls from the 1970s and onwards, admonishing teachers to gradually include pupils *in* the ongoing democratic process, this bears witness of an expansion of what Arendt calls the social – and this in a fashion which seems

⁸⁵ "Utgångspunkten för förslagen är att kommuner och skolenheterna i kommunen bör ges möjlighet att anpassa undervisningen efter enskilda elevers eller grupp av elevers behov [...] Skolan bör i högre än f.n. sträva efter ett arbetssätt som knyter an till elevernas verklighet." Bill 1975/76:39, p. 1.

⁸⁶ Which is in line with the changes that Joakim Landahl has described, see: Landahl, 2006, p. 152ff.

indissoluble interlaced with the parallel dissolving of the lines of demarcation of *demos*.

This endeavor we also find on the first page of the goals and guidelines of the 1980 curriculum: “The school is obliged to give pupils increased responsibility and influence concurrently with their rising age and maturity.”⁸⁷ Intimately associated with this admonition was a change of emphasis of the concept of equality.⁸⁸ This came, among others, to the fore in a clear criticism against school for its continued contribution to the reproduction of class society (which the calls for a greater consideration of pupils private experiences and interests should be understood as a retort *to*).⁸⁹ Further manifestations of this were, I contend, the downgrading of the importance of content as well as the difference between practical and theoretical work in light of the desire to create a more equal school; a school where teachers assume an increasingly supportive role for the individual rather than working for the imparting/introduction – and hence also the articulation/explication – of the currently existing society as well as its emergence.

A supportive and stimulating teacher role

In the commission “Teachers in School for Development” (SOU 1978: 86), which underlay Teachers Training reform of 1988 and was strongly dominated by parliamentary representatives, the investigators took as their point of departure the assumption that school is developing towards:

⁸⁷ “Skolan har skyldighet att ge eleverna ökat ansvar och medinflytande i takt med deras stigande ålder och mognad.” Lgr 80, p. 15.

⁸⁸ A change which also implies a shift of the implicit time horizon in educational policies, see: Wedin, 2017b.

⁸⁹ Boman, 2002; Englund 2005, p. 268-272; Richardson 2010, p. 14, 138-140; Wahlström, 2002, p. 53; Börjesson, 2016; Ringarp, 2011, p. 39f., 46.

- a broadened area of responsibility: the teacher's co-responsibility for student's overall personality development increases;
- a changing student role: teacher's role becomes more supportive and stimulating than directly knowledge-mediating;
- a changing learning process: increased emphasis on those aspects of education that prepare the student to seek knowledge, to analyze, to consider and to make decisions, to influence and to change;
- a "more open" school: increased co-operation over class- and subject boundaries as well as over student and staff boundaries in school; widened contact areas with the own community and with other countries.⁹⁰

The characteristic trait, as to what regards our interest here, of the teacher assignment implicated in the investigation, is the downgrading of imparting knowledge. The teacher is depicted rather as a deliverer of the concealed energies that the child harbors. Based on the assumption of the active and creative child, a more supervising teacher role is advocated, where teachers, as stated in the above citation, supports and stimulates rather than transmit knowledge. The teachers' education should thus from now on be characterized, among other things, by a "significant influence for pupils over the content and form of education".⁹¹

Intimately intertwined with this further democratized teachers ideal is, I believe, the endeavor to bring different teacher categories closer to each other. Manifestations hereof are not only to be found in the teachers education reforms of 1988 and 2001, which both contributed to a nearing of teachers from different departments of school, but also in the bill on schools internal work already in the 1970s. On the first page of bill 1975/76:39, the Social Democratic Government representatives suggest that "primary school should more than what is currently the case apply working methods and forms of work that more closely connect to

⁹⁰ SOU 1978:86, p. 24.

⁹¹ "[...] avsevärt inflytande för de studerande över utbildningens innehåll och utformning". SOU 1978:86, p. 24.

preschool education”.⁹² This call should be understood in light of the emphasis of the SIA investigation of a “soft school start”, where commissioners stress that no tests of readiness for school attendance may occur.⁹³ However, on an overall level, the admonitions should also be understood as an endeavor to create a more equal and inclusive school: a “truly equivalent education” as the phrase goes in the directives of the SIA-report.⁹⁴

As mentioned above, the attempts to bring different teacher categories closer to each other were not new; already twenty years earlier, the Teacher Training Specialist Committee had argued against the distinction class teacher/subject teacher. Strongly contributing to this strive was the desire to not only change the forms of the parallel educational system, but to also dissolve the remaining implicit inner structures that continued to reproduce the now formally replaced educational system.⁹⁵ To this ambition should now also be added the already discussed further downplaying since the 1970s.⁹⁶ A consequence of the clearly expressed aim of having pupils learning how to learn rather than learning a particular content, was that critics of the distinction class/subject teacher were offered yet a further argument for their cause.

⁹² “[...] att grundskolan i högre grad än f.n. skall tillämpa arbetsätt och arbetsformer som mer knyter ant (*sic*) till förskolepedagogen”. Bill 1975/76:39, p. 1.

⁹³ Bill 1975/76:39, p. 1.

⁹⁴ “[...] reellt likvärdig utbildning”. Protokoll 1970-05-27, Utbildningsdepartement, quoted in: Lindensjö and Lundgren, 2014, p. 77.

⁹⁵ Which is in line with what historian Johanna Ringarp writes in her study on the teaching profession’s municipalization. This reform should, she concludes her dissertation, be considered “[...] as another step towards balancing the working conditions, wages and status of the previously historically distinguished groups of teachers” ([...] som ytterligare ett steg mot att utjämna arbetsvillkoren, lönerna och statusen mellan de tidigare historiskt skilda lärargrupperna”), Ringarp, 2011, p. 190.

⁹⁶ SOU 1978:86, p. 78f.

In bill 1984/85:122, once again with Hjelm-Wallén as responsible Minister, (but now as Minister of Education), the government wanted – through the teachers training – to take further steps in this direction. In the introduction, they mention how the 1980 curriculum represented important steps towards dissolving the boundary between the role of class teachers and that of specialist subject teachers. The bill further mentions that, e.g., the introduction of thematic studies, new syllabuses, and an emphasis of the basic skills (reading, writing and counting) more distinctly shall permeate all three stages of school.⁹⁷

In the wake of the 1980 curriculum, a merging of the orientation topics in two different blocks was also decided: social-studies as well as nature-oriented subjects. From now on, teaching should not only be based on “a subject matter”, but rather “on questions and issues which the students are confronted with outside school”.⁹⁸ With the teacher education reform of 1988, elementary school teachers training gained a more homogenous form as well: everyone who intended to work at elementary school would from now on go through a primary school education. This education was in turn divided into two directions: one aiming at form 1-6 and one at 3-9. For those who aimed at 3-9, the opportunity was offered to choose either nature-orientated subjects or social-studies oriented subjects. A special significance in the attempt to create a more student-centered school was attributed to didactics, which in the bill is described as the ability to make content “comprehensible for the student and put it into a context that the student understands *and has experience of*” [my italics].⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Bill 1984/85:122, p. 4.

⁹⁸ “[...] undervisningen på problem och frågeställningar såsom eleverna möter dem utanför skolan”. Bill 1984/85:122, 5. An idea that, in the form of the theme work, would strongly reflect the teaching ideal in the 1990s and beyond, see: Linderoth, 2016, p. 21f.

⁹⁹ “[...] begripligt för eleven och sätts in i ett sammanhang som eleven förstår *och har erfarenhet av*”. Bill 1984/85:122, p. 11.

To which extent it is reasonable to read this attempt in light of the admonishment to have primary school methods approaching preschool education (see bill 1975/76: 39), is not inferable from the empirical material underlying this study. However, if we to the bills of 1975/76: 39 and 1984/85: 122 add the teacher education reform from 2001, where a common general educational program for all teachers – from pre-school teachers to high school teachers – a pattern seems to emerge.¹⁰⁰ Common to the three bills from 1975, 1985 and 2000 is that they all point towards a homogenization of the teaching profession.¹⁰¹ Another common feature is that they all emphasize the importance of other “competencies” (conception borrowed from the teachers training bill of 2000) than the traditional transmission of a content.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Which is on the lines of how the Italian sociologist Piero Colla argues in his analysis of the impoverishment of the subject of history in educational politics throughout the Post-war period, see: Colla, 2017, p. 871.

¹⁰¹ Which is in line with the homogenization of the teaching body that education sociologist Emil Bertilsson shows in his dissertation: Bertilsson, 2014.

¹⁰² Another reason for this was that in the 1988 reform, additional steps were taken, in line with the 1980 curriculum, towards clearer goal management, and gave municipalities a significantly greater influence over the decisions on how these goals could be achieved. As the education historian Agneta Linné has pointed out, this helped to change the teacher’s assignment towards the ability of “local curriculum work, teamwork, follow-up and evaluation”, see: <http://www.lararnashistoria.se/sites/www.lararnashistoria.se/files/artiklar/L%C3%A4rarutbildningen%20i%20historisk%20belysning%20o.pdf>. Another aspect, highlighted by Stenlås, is the injunctions to have teachers working more closely around a pupil rather than with teachers from the same subject. As he points out, this also indicate that the centre of gravity shifted from time to in-depth studies within one subject, or deepening subject-related discussions with colleagues from the same subject, to more general discussions about *pupils* rather than *subjects*, see: Stenlås, 2009, p. 67.

This is something that they share with today's remarkably severe economic tone in educational policy issues.¹⁰³ As Ylva Hasselberg writes, they both – the post-war's increasing focus on methods and pedagogy, as well as the later, strongly market-oriented educational policies – shift the “emphasis from the goals of the activity to the means that should be subordinated the goals: [economic] efficiency and pedagogy”.¹⁰⁴ Thus, following Hasselberg's argumentation, rather than petering out as the left wing impulses towards the end of the 1970s began to abate, these form- and technology oriented changes continued to structure educational policies all the way up to the last wave of reforms between 2008-2011.

A democratic authority

In line with what has been said, the Social Democratic Government behind the new teachers training bill *En förnyad lärarutbildning* (1999/2000:135), re-emphasize that it is becoming increasingly difficult to predict which knowledge that will be required in the future. Simultaneously, new concepts have now been added that seem to reflect certain shift of nuances:

The role of the teacher will therefore increasingly be attached to the ability to create personal meetings. Professional tasks become more personal than role-determined. Rather than taking over a role, or a tradition, each teacher must conquer and earn her/his own role –

¹⁰³ Because it is an educational policy that strives to allow “entrepreneurship ... to penetrate the entire education system”, see: ”Strategi för entreprenörskap inom utbildningsområdet”, Regeringskansliet (Näringsdepartementet & Utbildningsdepartementet), 2009. For analysis of the entrepreneurship concept's growth and location in today's school, see: Ringarp, 2013; Leffler, 2006; Wedin, 2015.

¹⁰⁴ “[...] betoningen från målen med verksamheten till de medel som borde vara underordnade målen: [ekonomisk] effektivitet och pedagogik”. Hasselberg, 2009, p. 78.

and hence her/his authority. Authority is something gained in a democratic process.¹⁰⁵

Of particular interest here is that teachers should have the ability to create personal meetings: their tasks are now becoming increasingly personal. The invitation should be read in light of the equality-promoting admonishment that teachers should meet, and thus acknowledge, the individual student and her experiences. The idea of the deserved authority can be clearly related to the desire to create a more equal relationship between pupil and teacher, and hereby democratizing the educational system. Moreover, between the lines we can also glimpse a strong confidence in the performative dimension of knowledge. In line with the extenuation of the content, the contours take form of a teacher that in “personal meetings” with her students performatively *creates* knowledge.¹⁰⁶ A further illustration of this is that teachers are asked to take greater responsibility for “orchestrating an activity implying that pupils and teachers develop mutual respect”.¹⁰⁷

The idea of staging leads thoughts to the ideas of knowledge and learning that Swedish professor in pedagogics Jonas Linderöth refers to as “constructivist-inspired teaching” in his recently published book *Lärarens återkomst*.¹⁰⁸ An expression of this, but as previously mentioned with roots far back in post-war educational policies, are the since the 1990s very influential ideas about socio-cultural learning. In policy documents, this is e.g. expressed in a discussion regarding the concept of knowledge in the report *School for Bildung* (SOU 1992:94), which was commissioned to provide a basis for the upcoming curriculum

¹⁰⁵ Bill 1999/2000:135, p. 8. The fact that some teachers have experienced that the teacher's authority in the classroom has decreased is, on the other hand, a perception that goes far back in time, see: Landahl, 2006, p. 13 of.

¹⁰⁶ Which can be compared to what Gert Biesta describes as a shift from education to learning: Biesta, 2012, p. 23.

¹⁰⁷ “[...] iscensätta en verksamhet som innebär att elever och lärare utvecklar ömsesidig respekt”. Bill 1999/2000:135, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸ Linderöth, 2016.

reform (which in turn formed part of the major educational reforms around 1990).¹⁰⁹ In “knowledging,” writes Ingrid Carlgren, the author behind the section on knowledge, there is no right or wrong: it is “work that is the goal”.¹¹⁰ According to the socio-cultural learning, which she advocates, knowledge is described as:

[...] neither external nor inner, outside human, or any inner, inside the individual, but rather something that lies between the individual and the environment. An important part of this environment are other humans, the social context in which knowledge is communicated through language.¹¹¹

Read against this background, the idea of staging not only appears more comprehensible, but does also render it more harmonious with the image of school that comes to the fore in bill 1999/2000: 135. As in previously analysed documents, it is emphasized that pupils should be involved in planning the work as well as, together

¹⁰⁹ *Skola för bildning* (1992:94). The Swedish theorist who is primarily associated with this perspective is Roger Säljö, which Ingrid Carlgren also refers to in her reasoning about the knowledge concept in the investigation. The ideas that the socio-cultural tradition rests on hark back to the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934).

¹¹⁰ “kunskapandet [...] arbetet som är målet”. SOU 1992:94, p. 67. Compare with Linderöth’s reasoning regarding the constructivist epistemological theory of knowledge in: Linderöth, 2016, p. 38ff.

¹¹¹ ”I ett sociokulturellt perspektiv är kunskaper inte något som individen har i form av färdigförpackade enheter som är lagrade i ett förråd. I varje fall är detta ingen lyckad bild. All den information som finns lagrad i böcker, och som individen kan ha tagit till sig, är exempelvis inte kunskap i sig.”, SOU 1992:94, p. 73. Compare also, for example Roger Säljö’s description of an earlier textbook for the teacher program: “In a socio-cultural perspective, knowledge is not something that the individual has in form of pre-packaged devices that are stored in a storehouse. In any case, this is not a good picture. For example, all the information stored in books, which the individual may have acquired, is not knowledge in itself.”, see: Säljö, 2000, p. 125.

with teachers, to “determine how the goals are to be achieved”.¹¹² The teacher’s task is thus, with new information technology, to primarily supervise pupils as well as to provide them with “conditions for evaluating, critically reviewing and process gained information to useful knowledge”.¹¹³ In addition to the changes around 1990, the government emphasizes that one of the central motives behind the reform is that it should be seen as a rejoinder to the criticism that education had not given teacher students “the opportunity to develop the skills related to social and pupil-caring tasks of the teacher profession”.¹¹⁴

The imperative that the teacher’s task should be more personal rather than role-determined is, I think, symptomatic. It clearly narrows down the changing conception of the teacher that I have tried to discern here, and by extension school as an institutional form in its entirety, where the teacher’s *way of being*, her character, is attributed an increasingly emphasized importance. In relation to the above outlined backdrop, this shift of emphasis should not be considered a deviation; with the downplaying of transmission of knowledge and clear requests that teachers rather should serve as a support for pupils to learn how to learn as well as parting from the personal experiences of pupils, the emphasis of the personal seems congenial. A yet further expression of this shift from school as a mediating institution, aiming at introducing emerging generations to the political sphere, was the catalog of individual-based values introduced in the new curricula of 1994, Lpo 94 and Lpf 1994 (for mandatory school and high school

¹¹² “[...] avgöra hur verksamhetsmålen ska nås”. Bill 1999/2000:135, p. 10.

¹¹³ “[...] förutsättningar att utvärdera, kritiskt granska och bearbeta inhämtad information till användbar kunskap”. Bill 1999/2000:135, p. 9.

¹¹⁴ “[...] möjlighet att utveckla de kompetenser som hänger samman med läraryrkets sociala och elevvårdande uppgifter”. In addition, it could not in a sufficiently big extent place the school in a broader context (“i ett större sammanhang”). Bill 1999/2000:135, p. 10. The competences in question are: cognitive, communicative, cultural, creative, critical, social and didactic skills.

respectively). In virtue of being articulated without any substantively anchored backdrop that could give them direction, they appear primarily – in light of the focus of this paper – as a symptom of a decreasingly mediating institution, progressively more based on an abstract, atomistic idea of the individual.¹¹⁵ As the French philosopher Marcel Gauchet wrote already in 1980 regarding the reappearance of human rights in political debates:

It has formulated a demand, it has revealed a powerlessness. Of imagination, we are strangely deprived [...]¹¹⁶

Conclusion

From having been expected to pass on a selection of previous generations' knowledge to the new, the teacher's ideal throughout the post-war period shifted towards being a stimulating support for pupils, which in turn were expected to increasingly fill out the content themselves based on their preferences.¹¹⁷ Since today's content may at any rate be dated tomorrow, the supporting form becomes the primary teachers task. *That* this has contributed to a weakening of the teaching profession has been mentioned earlier.¹¹⁸ What I have tried to draw attention to here is (i) how we can track several of the long-term changes behind this shift back to the foundational ideas behind the comprehensive school, as well

¹¹⁵ What is a change that has been discussed from different starting points and along different lines, among other things, by: Villey, 2014; Milbank, 2012; Gauchet, 2017; MacIntyre, 2016.

¹¹⁶ "Il a formulé une exigence, il a révélé une impuissance. D'imagination, nous sommes étrangement privés [...], Gauchet, 2002, p. 13.

¹¹⁷ In a recently published (2015) sociological study of how an elite is reproduced in Djursholm, Swedish economist Mikael Holmqvist describes a similar development and argues that it contributes to replacing a meritocracy with what he calls a consecration, see: Holmqvist, 2015. Regarding the Bourdieu-inspired idea of consecration, see also Sandgren's study regarding the growth of boarding schools in Sweden (and in the rest of the world), Sandgren, 2015.

¹¹⁸ Hasselberg, 2009; Stenlås, 2009; Stenlås, 2011.

as (ii) some hitherto insufficiently examined political-theoretical problems that these shifts have actualized.

In the preceding parallel educational system, it was clear how different pupils (generally from different classes of society), were prepared for different occupations (which *tended* to be within the same social stratum as that of the parents). When the comprehensive school replaced the parallel educational system, this was something that reformers hoped to do away with. However, as critics emphasized already in the 1970s, it didn't take long before critique amassed in this regard against the new comprehensive school as well.¹¹⁹ *One* crucial policy retort to this criticism was to change the forms of school's internal work.¹²⁰ Hereby, an intensification was initiated of the widely shared conviction that school needs to be further democratized. The desire to create a more equal school thus goes hand in hand with the explicit endeavors towards a democratization. A consequence of this was that the boundary between pupils and teachers became increasingly diffuse. This is the first border-dissolving tendency that I disengage. A second change in the same vein was the desire to dissolve differences between what was originally class and subject teachers. The third border-annulling impulse that I highlight was the criticism of the dichotomy practical-theoretical work. These shifts should, I maintain, be understood as materializations of a changed notion of school as an institution, which increasingly was becoming regarded as *part of* the (democratic) public sphere.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Boman, 2002; Englund, 2005, p. 268-272; Richardson, 2010, p. 14, 138-140; Wahlström, 2002, p. 53; Börjesson, 2016; Ringarp 2011, p. 39f., 46.

¹²⁰ Englund, 2005, p. 213.

¹²¹ The contradictory, inner equality dynamics that I highlight here may - and should - be supplemented with studies which for example examine how the changes can be related to the ever-present economic framework; as Linderoth points out, it is for example also more cost-effective to allow students to work more independently, Linderoth, 2016, p. 95. Due to the

Another change is the from the 1970s and onwards stronger emphasis on teachers to further approach the shifting experiences with which pupils come to school; a request that goes hand in hand with the overarching aim to have school in general approaching pupil's horizons of experience. In so arguing, the reformers also in parallel brought about a furthering of the private sphere within this peculiar space "in-between"; as such, it was an over-time drawn out shift that we have good reasons to consider an expansion of what we with inspiration from Arendt could call the social. It is a manifestation of that which the Dutch sociologist Anton C. Zijderveld describes as an increasing anti-institutional modus, where common institutions are increasingly regarded as limitations of each individual's *subjective* identity.¹²²

A further expression of this institutional dilution, are the transmutations that the teacher role has undergone, in particular as a consequence of the strive to counteract that the parallel school structures survived *within* the comprehensive school (which in itself should be understood as an expression of the impulse to enhance equality in the educational system).¹²³ By downplaying the content-oriented, imparting aspect of education, school's practices approached the surrounding community, thus undermining it as a specific for the public *preparing* institution, and the teachers position within it. It is in this light, by virtue of

article-format of this text, with the considerations of space that this entails, such external causes have here been left aside.

¹²² Zijderveld, 2000, p. 13. The author here differs between normative subjektivism (the idea of self-creating and independent self) and the descriptive assertion that the individual has a central position in modern society (such as the bearer of rights, etc.). Zijderveld makes no secret that he is inspired by Émile Durkheim, see for example: Durkheim, 2014, p. 1-39.

¹²³ Like the recently named tendencies, these can also be related to the desire to create a more democratic and equal school. As stated above, however, this must also be understood in the light of the teacher shortage that followed in the wake of the explosive development of the educational system.

representing the primary common institution, that I maintain that the late modern teacher ideal should be regarded as a *character*.¹²⁴

Out of these shifts emerges what I would like to call the paradox of democratic equality. It consists in the fact, that the intensified attempts to create a school inspired by a public-oriented logic, in relevant respects seem to have helped paving the way for the clearly private-oriented logic that has characterized the development since the 1990s. As stated above, post-war educational policies were characterized by an effort to create a more democratic school: first through the comprehensive school, and then on in reforming the inner work.¹²⁵ However, a consequence of this impulse was that the common fabric in which the pupil was expected to be integrated became more fragile as the importance of articulating/reproducing a common backdrop – in the name of democratic equality – was reduced.¹²⁶ The catalog of individual-addressing values introduced in the 1994 curriculum is in this regard telling.

As a consequence of the pursuit of creating a more democratic school, various measures have been taken that have weakened school's special position as an institution whose primordial aim it is to *prepare* pupils for a life in the common sphere. The

¹²⁴ Regarding educational politics, see: Englund, 2005; Börjesson, 2016. For studies in which the more comprehensive social changes are in focus: Boréus, 1994; Antman et al., 1993; Österberg et al., 2014.

¹²⁵ However, the basic structure of the problem has been extensively discussed for over 200 years. As the French philosopher Frédéric Brahami writes: "[...] society is in a strict sense democratic to the extent that it falls upon the individual to judge it; nevertheless, if each individual expresses its personal opinion, it appears deemed to crumble away.", Brahami, 2016, p. 222.

¹²⁶ As I show above and others have shown before me, this does not mean that, for example, labour market adaptations have also – and perhaps even substantially – contributed to the changes depicted here. As already mentioned, in note 29, the question of how different spheres of society relate to each other falls outside the scope of this paper.

increasingly radical attempts of creating a more democratic and equal school have thus fomented an increased adaptation to the individual. In parallel, it has contributed to a furthering of the social in a way that has undermined school as a public project, paradoxically thus indirectly paving the way for the *explicit* privatization that occurred in the 1990s. Against this backdrop does, in order to mention the most conspicuous example of this, the introduction of a voucher system, which explicitly appeals to the private interest, no longer appear as such a sharp rupture.¹²⁷ It seems rather as an – in terms of the tension between private and public – shift of nuances of an impulse that stretches all the way back to the discussions about the introduction of the comprehensive school. In this way, the here presented results also nuance the many studies emphasizing how the reforms around 1990 indicate a rupture with the previously pursued politics.

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¹²⁷ Compare with, for example, Englund, 1994.

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