

SLOYD TEACHER EDUCATION IN SWEDEN

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In this article I will discuss the development of Sloyd teacher education in modern time in Sweden. How it changed from being governed by teacher training colleges to the universities. I will point at some tendencies and consequences and discuss a future scenario within the European unified so-called Bologna-system.

The Sloyd subject

Sloyd for girls and Sloyd for boys were introduced as elective school subjects about 120 years ago in Swedish Elementary schools¹. Later on the name of the subject changed to Textile Sloyd and Wood- and metal Sloyd. Since 1969 it is regarded as *one* subject, Sloyd, with *two branches*. Nowadays the pupils are trained in both branches at elementary level. At lower secondary level they can usually chose branch for shorter or longer periods of time or for specific projects. At higher secondary level there are no Sloyd subjects, but Technology, Design, Fashion and more vocational like training in carpentry, dress-making etc.

Sloyd Teacher education from 1885 - 1960

Teacher education for Sloyd teachers in textile work or in woodworking has been given in Sweden since 1880's. From the beginning there were 2-4 weeks courses for elementary teachers, so they could teach the Sloyd subject as well as the other subjects. The teachers were trained at small private institutes run by pedagogs like Otto Salomon, Hulda Lundin and Maria Nordenfeldt.² The sloyd teacher training was carried out within private institutions or as elective subjects at teacher training colleges until around 1960.

After the end of World War II, there was a political consensus in the Swedish parliament about creating a new, modern comprehensive school for everybody. With a new compulsory school, there was also a need for a new teacher education, usually provided in teacher training colleges. Four teacher training colleges specialized in textile work in Umea, Uppsala, Stockholm and Gothenburg and one teacher training college in wood and metal work in Linköping were established. They were independent colleges but governed by national rules and regulations. The entrance requirements were quite wide regarding the handicraft field, but not as demanding regarding academic knowledge. 4-6 years elementary school plus 5-3 years of secondary schooling was enough to enter teacher-training college. The textile teacher programme became three years, while the wood- and metal teacher programme was only one year. On the other hand the entrance requirements on manual experience were more severe for wood and metal teachers to be. At least 3-4 years experience from the vocational field in carpentry or metalwork was necessary, while four months weaving and embroidery and another four months of fashion design and dressmaking in vocational school to was required to enter the textile teacher programme. To become a

¹ The Swedish school subject Sloyd is more or less equivalent to the Japanese Kateika and Gijutsu, but without cooking, machines and digital technology and with more emphasis on form, colour, design and craft techniques.

² Borg, Kajsa (2006); Thorbjörnsson, Hans (2006),

<http://www.educ.umu.se/presentation/publikationer/lof/2006.html#2006>.

teacher in Sloyd was very popular and there were many applicants who struggled year after year to gradually gain higher grades/scores or to get longer experience from apprenticeships in order to be admitted. In Sweden at that time, the system of entrance examination was not used.

Sloyd teacher education 1960 – 2007

During the last 30 years, different reforms have changed Swedish teacher education in general and Sloyd teacher education especially. In 1977 several occupational programmes like nurses, social workers and teacher education were transformed into the national academic system³. It was anticipated that the academic influences and organisation would add qualities to the former occupational educations. The aim of the reforms was to unify different types of teacher training colleges and institutes and to get them all organized as academic educational programmes in order to construct a democratic system for higher education in general. Another goal was to level up the status of teachers in creative subjects like Sloyd, Art, Home Economics, Physical Education and Music at the same time as the different subject traditions were supposed to add values to the ordinary teacher training. Textile teachers were educated in three universities, Umea, Uppsala and Gothenburg and wood- and metal teachers in Linköping University (Borg, 2007).

Next big change was in 1988⁴. Earlier, elementary teachers taught all subjects, except Sloyd, while secondary school teachers taught 2-3 subjects only. This reform aimed at educating elementary teachers with a profile in their competence. From now on they were supposed to specialize in either Swedish language or Mathematics in addition to other subjects, except Sloyd. For the Sloyd teachers they have instead to broaden their competence. It was no longer possible to become a teacher in only Sloyd, the students have to get education to teach in another subject as well at elementary or secondary level. Sloyd could preferably be combined with Mathematics, Swedish Language and English. It was also possible to add Technology as a subsidiary subject. Another novelty was, that for the first time, textile and wood- and metal teacher education were given as parallel programs at the same university, in Gothenburg, Linköping and Umea. The conditions for cooperation between the two branches of Sloyd teacher education increased considerably. In Stockholm Institute of Education started a new Wood- and Metal sloyd teacher education and in Uppsala University they continue a long tradition of educating teachers in Textile sloyd. At Gothenburg University they broke the tradition and made a Sloyd teacher program combining Textiles, Wood and Metal as one academic subject. The students get a broader knowledge about different materials, but less time to practise various craft techniques in each material. They have to make their own priorities, through writing study contract, negotiated by their professors (Borg, 2007).

In 2000 the next version of teacher education in Sweden was launched⁵. All teacher education from nursery level to secondary level was nationwide organized within the one and only Teacher Education Program. The admission requirements were generally the same for all teachers, with some extra requirements for certain subjects. Here Sloyd teacher education got a real dilemma. In case of Sloyd, it was difficult to ask for special subject requirements, because there is no Sloyd education or something similar in higher secondary level, especially not within the programs, which prepare for academic studies. On the other hand the vocational branches of senior high school did not fulfil the academic requirements for admission to university. The earlier requirements regarding craft knowledge and skills had to be abandoned within the new system. The new teacher program was organized with one compulsory part for all teachers. They should have 1,5 years of common and general studies in education,

³ Proposition 1975:9: *Reformering av högskoleutbildningen*.

⁴ Proposition 1984/85:122.

⁵ SOU 1999:63; Proposition 1999/2000:135.

pedagogy and student teaching. The compulsory part also included a written academic essay at the end of the program. For the rest of the time (2,5-3 years) the students could make their own choices and make their own subject combinations. Until 2000 it has been necessary for Sloyd teachers to be, to have as minimum 1,5 years of subject education at academic level. In the new program it was decided that one year was the minimum amount of time for subject most subject studies (exceptions was allowed for some subjects, but not Sloyd). On the other hand the new program opened up for additional interdisciplinary studies and for new subject combinations like Sloyd and Art, Sloyd and History, Sloyd and Physical education etc. (Borg 2007).

What has happened – Consequences

It is possible to recognize some tendencies. First, the change in *time allocation*. The teacher education has until now become longer but less specified. Earlier it was possible to become a teacher in the Sloyd subject after 3 years of study. Now it takes 4-4,5 years to become teacher in Sloyd and another subject. Within this time of study the general teacher knowledge occupy at least 30% of time. The organization of the course is based on the idea that it is good for the students in schools to learn in interdisciplinary settings and themes. The world and our living is not divided into subjects areas, therefore the teachers should have the competence to teach in several subjects and be able to combine different subject content knowledge.

Second, *the balance between different content in sloyd teacher education*. The balance between the manual subject content knowledge and the academic knowledge has changed. Earlier the knowledge of various craft techniques was the main focus in teacher education; now the general academic level has got equal or higher importance. The change in entrance requirements can work as an illustration of the tendency. In the 1960's the students could enter teacher-training colleges with lower secondary level academic competence but with required high level of subject knowledge required for admission. We have now the reversed situation: higher secondary level of academic entrance requirement but only lower secondary level required for the subject knowledge. The general teaching knowledge has increased to now cover 30% -40% of the total time and Sloyd and another subject has to share the 60-65%, which is left. The Sloyd subject content knowledge has been reduced, but other subject content have been added. On the other hand, Sloyd teachers to be, has got more academic knowledge in general and about the teaching professions in particular. The students are now used to keep a critical academic standpoint towards information and literature. They can read and understand academic articles and they can write according to the standards of an academic report. Thanks to the increasing number of reported research and thesis in the field and the fact that the all students have to write academic essays, the scientific and academic level have increased considerably. As a result also the knowledge about the Sloyd subject itself, about methods for teaching and learning, about how to organize the classroom, about gender and multicultural issues etc. have been documented. Based on the written texts it is possible to discuss and question the findings and that can serve as a base for improvement. The difference in education between teachers in Sloyd and teachers in other subjects has disappeared.

Third, *the subject content knowledge*. Nowadays the Meta cognitive knowledge about craft has become more important than before. It is no longer necessary to be very skilled in many craft techniques as a Sloyd teacher, but it is good to know about what is possible to do within the Sloyd subject and why certain projects in Sloyd is challenging and good for the students in schools. Looking at the subject content knowledge we will find that the manual part of the subject, the work with textile or wood and metal materials has to be reduced in favour for students' reflection and work with written examinations. When regarding that also the entrance requirements in knowledge and skills in craft techniques has been abolished, the manual education at university level today is given on a more basic level than earlier.

On the other hand the focus can be more varied and the students can work, based on their own preferences, sometimes using individual “contract” as agreement with the professors.

Finally *Teaching and learning methods* has changed. Earlier there were many lessons a week where the students worked in workshops or studios under supervision of a teacher educator, who was skilled in this special area of the subject. The student did learn from the teacher like an apprentice does learn from his/her master. Some would call that a reproductive way of learning. The professors now usually introduce a new theme, a new technique or a new approach; they will set up a framework for organization of time and content according to the course of study and they are responsible for the examinations. After that the students themselves organize what to do and how to do within the framework. Nowadays the students are asked to work much more independently. The education has generally taken a turn towards more individualized performances and results compared to earlier, when collaborative work and group projects were conducted on a more or less regular base.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) and the use of computers have influenced the teacher education in Sloyd and added new possibilities of multimodality. In the first hand it is much easier to produce written text on a computer than by hand or by a typewriter. This means that the requirements on the quality of any academic text in undergraduate level has sky rocked in the last ten years and the number of pages produced has increased considerably. Secondly the use of computerized presentation program where text, pictures, sound and short films can be mixed has changed the way of writing essays, doing examinations as well as giving lectures and instructions about craft techniques. Third, teacher education in Sloyd is now given on Internet, based on the idea of flexible learning⁶. Many students cannot attend Sloyd teacher education programs, only offered at five universities in Sweden. Umea University has developed a series of courses where the main part of the work is done at home, under guidance from the university. Communicating by digital conference platform creates possibilities to discuss, exchange ideas and form communities of practise together with professors and other students.

The specified program for becoming a teacher in Sloyd has been replaced by a program where the student can build his/her own mixture of compulsory and optional courses. The five universities offering Sloyd teacher education has developed along different directions. The strong tendency towards an education keeping academic standards has caused problems to recruit professors with subject knowledge in crafts as well as keeping at least a Master degree in relevant subject field. The governmental intention to create a multidimensional teacher education for all teachers, keeping good academic standards might be valuable in the long run. But from a Sloyd education perspective there have been many changes where not enough consideration has been paid to the immediate consequences.

What's next?

From August 2007 the teacher education is supposed to be organized to fit the European standardized so-called “Bologna System”. That means in general that Swedish young people have to attend 9 years compulsory schooling plus 3 years in secondary school. After that all higher education at universities should be organized in three levels, 3 years undergraduate studies (Bachelor), 2 years advanced studies (Master) and 4 years of doctoral studies (PhD). The political decision about this change was taken in March 2007. When this text is written it is too early to know exactly what will happen with the teacher education in Sweden. It seems that the coming change will take us back to a system, which is more similar to what we had 30 years ago. The unified Teacher program from 2000 will be divided into one line (3 – 3,5 years) for nursery and lower elementary teachers and another line (4-5 years) for secondary

⁶ Rehn (2005)

teacher education. With the coming change according to the Bologna system the general teacher education knowledge will be reduced and the study time for every subject will increase especially for those students who want to teach at secondary level. For those who want to become nursery or primary teachers, the time for teacher education will be reduced with about 25%. What will happen to the Sloyd teacher education we do not know so far?

As a conclusion; the academization of Sloyd teacher education has brought in new standards and increased the academic level in both teaching, learning and producing texts. Sloyd education does no longer follow its own track, but is equivalent to any other teacher education. Earlier Sloyd teachers kept a comparatively low status, now the differences are not as big between different subject teachers. Most of them teach Sloyd *and* one to two other subjects. The Meta-level of Sloyd knowledge is growing. The research interest has increased and reports and dissertations tell about so far unknown facts connected to Sloyd in schools. On the other hand the time spent in teacher education are more occupied by reading, discussing and writing than doing textile, wood- and metalwork. The informants in my dissertation (Borg, 2001) put much value in what they called the "differentness" of Sloyd education. They thought Sloyd was a unique school subject because of the activity and the process starting in visualizing an idea, ending in evaluating an object, which the child him/herself had produced. The tendency is to make the Sloyd teacher more similar to other teachers. Does that mean that also the Sloyd subject will be more similar to other subjects and therefore less interesting for the students?

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