



## Schooling for Tomorrow

### Background

The Swedish National Agency for School Improvement,<sup>1</sup>, decided on 1 July 2005 to participate in the international school development project organized by the OECD.

Our national agency agreed to a two-year commitment to OECD/CERI to implement an application of the *Schooling for Tomorrow project* with the main purpose of contributing to the development of an international wider theoretical framework, methodology, and analytical tools in the field of education.

Below please find a summary of the objectives, background, purpose, content, and planning of this project.

### New societal questions emerging

Schools, administrators, and policy makers around the world are now beginning to ask bold new questions about connecting the drama enacted on the global stage as well as new knowledge emerging about schooling and learning. Society is changing, in both economic and democratic terms. Important trends in economy are: technological development and structural and as a consequence of this greater demands putting on competence and learning throughout life has emerged. Knowledge and competence become perishable and replaceable goods. As a consequence of the technological development, the organization of workplaces is also changing. Hierarchical models are replaced with flat organizations in which demands on extensive individual competence arise. Globalization puts new demands on the importance of human capital, transport and communication become cheaper, and new technology is rapidly disseminated. Companies and capital move freely across national borders. Investment in physical capital is no longer a stable competitive advantage comparing with investments towards increasing competence of the general population. A country's future competitive advantages are dependent on investment in education and life-long learning. The increasing use of Internet and other advanced technologies has created a new context for workers and employees. Schools will have to reflect the emerging realities of the working life if they are to continue to

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<sup>1</sup> Myndigheten för Skolutveckling, henceforth referred to as MSU

have this function in society. The place of work no longer is in one location but instead rather found wherever there is a demand or where opportunities take employees around the world.

### **The Swedish wider education policy and reform process**

The 1990s were characterized by dramatic changes in the Swedish educational system. The strong government control that was previously exercised in virtually every field was replaced by a goal-oriented system, extending considerable local control. The responsibility of meeting national objectives decided by the parliament (*Sveriges riksdag*) now lies with the local authorities (*municipalities*) and the national budget provides municipalities with a sum of money to carry out the various municipal activities.

The new decentralized governance system means that, within the objectives and framework established by the Government and Riksdag, the local municipality may determine how its schools are to be managed. It requires that a local school plan be written, describing the funding, organization, development, and evaluation of school activities be adopted. Using the approved national curriculum, objectives, and guidelines for the public education system together with a local school plan, the principal of each school draws up a local work plan. This is done in consultation with the school's teachers and other personnel. An important feature of this decentralization is that state grants to municipalities are no longer earmarked for education or other special purposes. Since 1990, teachers and other school personnel have been employed by the municipalities. These changes have been coupled with other substantial reforms, including the reformulation of national curricula, a redesigned three-year upper secondary school, and a new national goal-oriented grading and assessment system. Another important reform has been the opening up of the system to allow for greater school choice, with a growing number of schools run by other actors than the local municipalities (*friskolor*).

In the context of the new decentralized system of governance and responsibility of the Swedish educational system there are two national agencies for education with different tasks. Both agencies answer to the Ministry of Education Research and Culture (*Utbildnings- och kulturdepartementet*)<sup>2</sup>: the National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) and the National Agency for School Improvement (*Myndigheten för Skolutveckling, MSU*).

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<sup>2</sup> The Ministry of Education, Research and Culture (*Utbildnings- och kulturdepartementet*) is responsible for matters regarding pre-school education and child care for school children, pre-school classes, compulsory school and equivalent schools, upper secondary school, independent schools, adult education, popular adult education, post-secondary education, universities and university colleges, research, study support, student social issues, youth policy, culture and media. There are three ministers in this field in Sweden – the Minister for Education, research and Culture; the Minister for Pre-School Education, Youth Affairs and Adult Learning; and the Minister for Schools

As performed by the National Agency for Education, the government needs to ensure target fulfillment by supervising, inspecting, and scrutinizing schools. National follow-ups and evaluations ensure a better understanding of the various systems' efficiency and relevance and provide a basis for assessments and decisions both on a national and on local levels. The national government also has the duty to support and promote local development efforts, as performed by the National Agency for School Improvement, by means of establishing frameworks for quality work, monitoring quality, and disseminating good practice recommendations and research findings.

### **The special roll of MSU in the context of SFT**

Access to education for all individuals is a fundamental right ensured by Swedish law. Every pre-school, school, upper secondary school and adult learning center is expected to provide an environment that stimulates learning and development. The main purpose of the National Agency for School Improvement (MSU) is to realize these ambitions. The Agency:

- Is responsible for general support to schools in nationally prioritized areas
- Supports local development of quality work and development of learning environments
- Stimulates competence development among educators
- Is responsible for the national program for headmaster training
- Supports the widened use of information technology (ICT) in education
- Disseminates knowledge, experiences, and research among professional educators
- Participates in national and international networks that stimulate school improvement and development

The National Agency for School Improvement cooperates with other actors, such as municipalities, schools, universities, and national unions that are interested in the development of education. Flexibility and effectiveness, respect for local needs and circumstances, as well as long-term commitment are qualities, which the agency strive to live up to. The Swedish government gives priority to development work in specific areas within which the agency has to act. At present, the national focus in educational development is in the fields of: quality assurance and school management, knowledge and assessment, cultural diversity and equity, democratic skills, adult learning and national growth.

### **The Analysis and Support Unit in MSU**

The SFT project will be effectuated by the Analysis and Support Unit (A-U) of the Agency. In this unit there is a special project group, working primarily with identifying and developing knowledge and analysis of trends and tendencies, which will or may eventually have an impact on

schooling and education, and analysing what actions the Agency should give priority to in order to fulfil the given task.

We expect that the SfT initiative will play a significant part in the overall work of the Analysis and Support Unit, specifically for the group assigned to monitoring national trends and tendencies.

### **Aims of the SfT project in Sweden**

To understand and act in accordance with the concept of “future thinking” will be a focal point for educational authorities, school leaders, and for the internal priorities of the Agency. The quicker the conditions of the surrounding world change, the more important it becomes to create dynamic and plausible scenarios of what the future may bring. To identify trends in the school environment and draw conclusions will be essential in the long-term perspective. The SfT project gives the Agency the necessary tools to map the national contemporary situation and identify future alternatives for education. To formulate possible future scenarios and study what may impact our route into the future is one of the goals of the project. Furthermore, the SfT project will function as a supporting action taken by the Agency towards the local level. Performing and analyzing such scenarios with school leaders, administrators, and other professionals will be a powerful instrument in the implementation of the educational system, thereby strengthening both the agency’s combined efforts for national and local development as well as in-house knowledge and range of analytical tools.

The agency is planning to use the scenarios developed by the OECD in two phases and action levels, and the aims are to:

*A) within the MSU Analysis and Support Unit:*

- Develop future scenarios of how learning and schooling will develop in future.
- Identify and deduct key factors and critical forces, as well as principal actors that will influence the options available to schools and the Agency in their efforts to support educational development.
- Clarify the balance between the Agency’s assignment in the development of schooling and future scenarios for education.
- Test scenario analyses in one nationally focused area, probably *Knowledge and assessment*.

*B) in one municipality:*

- Initiate specialized and strategic dialogue with school authorities and local educational officials and educators regarding future scenarios in education
- Support work towards describing plausible, general and local pictures of future educational development as well as conceivable aims, based on local qualified information and an analysis of national trends and tendencies.
- Stimulate new ways of thinking for goal-oriented decision-making.
- Promote an awareness of how present day decision-making will impact on tomorrow's schooling and learning; as well as support the municipalities to make informed and conscious decisions in accordance with the future they wish to realize.

## **Design and methodology**

During the fall of 2005 the project group introduced the project to the personnel of the concerned Unit within the Agency to ensure an understanding of SfT scenarios as an analytic tool. For the project to succeed, planning is of the utmost importance, which means that the second half of 2005 was used to organize the actions of the project and to contact and contract consultants specialized in scenario techniques. The members of the project group have taken or will take a course to gain more specific knowledge of scenario analysis.

The Agency aims to involve one municipality in this project. Their participation will be decided upon and supervised by the Agency (MSU). Local project leaders will be employed in the municipalities to operate and take action in the municipality, supported by the Agency and consultants in scenario planning.

The local project leader will send reports to MSU concerning the progress and outcome of actions taken, where the analysis and reporting to OECD will take place. The time frame for reporting to MSU will be decided upon in the more detailed planning stage that is to take place in early 2006.

There will be continual, formative local evaluations organized by the project leader in the municipality as well as a summative evaluation at the end of the project performed by the project group on Sweden's participation in Schooling for Tomorrow as a whole,

## **Activities, ongoing and planned**

INITIAL REPORT

Dnr: 2005:692

<b>Preparation</b>	<b>Training</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Analysis</b>	<b>Reporting</b>
a) Study of OECD/CERI material	a) Project group participation in scenario-analysis training program arranged by consultants.	a) Scenario-analysis testing in the A-U	Agency + municipality project manager + consultants	Joint reporting, including municipality project manager
b) Participation in CERI seminars		b) Introducing the scenario technique in one municipality, where an appointed local project leader will be responsible for implementing the project in the municipality, including writing continual reports on the progress.		
c) Presentation of SFT project to agency				
d) Planning and discussion with participants				
e) Translation of the OECD analytical tool				

### **Project group**

Peter Holmberg (Head, Analysis and Support Unit)

Sandra Mardones Larsson (Project Manager, SFT Initiative in Sweden)

Ann-Kristin Boström (MSU's representative in the national OECD-council)

AnnSofi Persson-Stenberg (Project Manager, Monitoring National Educational Trends and Tendencies)

Giulia Ray (Assistant/Project Secretary)

Representative from one municipality (from the local government administration level)

### **Project time frame**

June 2005–Dec. 2005      Preparation and training in scenario analysis

Jan. 2006–June 2006      Implementation

Aug. 2006–Dec. 2006      Implementation

Jan. 2007–June 2007      Analysis

Aug. 2007–Oct. 2007      Reporting