



REGERINGSKANSLIET

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**Government Offices of Sweden**

**Ministry of Education and Research**

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**OECD - Overcoming school failure. Country background  
report Sweden**

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The OECD project Overcoming School Failure: Policies that Work provides evidence on the policies that are effective to reduce school failure by improving low attainment and reducing dropout, and proactively supports countries in promoting reform. The project builds on the conceptual framework developed in the OECD's No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education (2007). The project has two complementary strands of work designed to ensure both comparative analysis of policies that are successful in reducing education failure as well as national analysis and support towards action that different OECD and partner countries might carry out. The comparative analysis will develop comparative analysis on the policy levers which can contribute to overcome school failure in schools and reduce inequities. This Swedish background report is one of the items comparative analysis will be based on, in addition to data analysis, research and literature reviews.

The background report should not be considered as a publication in itself since it consists of answers to several questions asked by the OECD staff. The structure is as follows – in Section I the report describes the educational system as it was in the fall 2010. All forthcoming reforms are described in Section II.

## SECTION I: POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO OVERCOME SCHOOL FAILURE

### Chapter 1: Structure and governance

1. Please briefly outline the main structural features of the educational system (providing a simple diagram if possible).

a. Main features of the school system

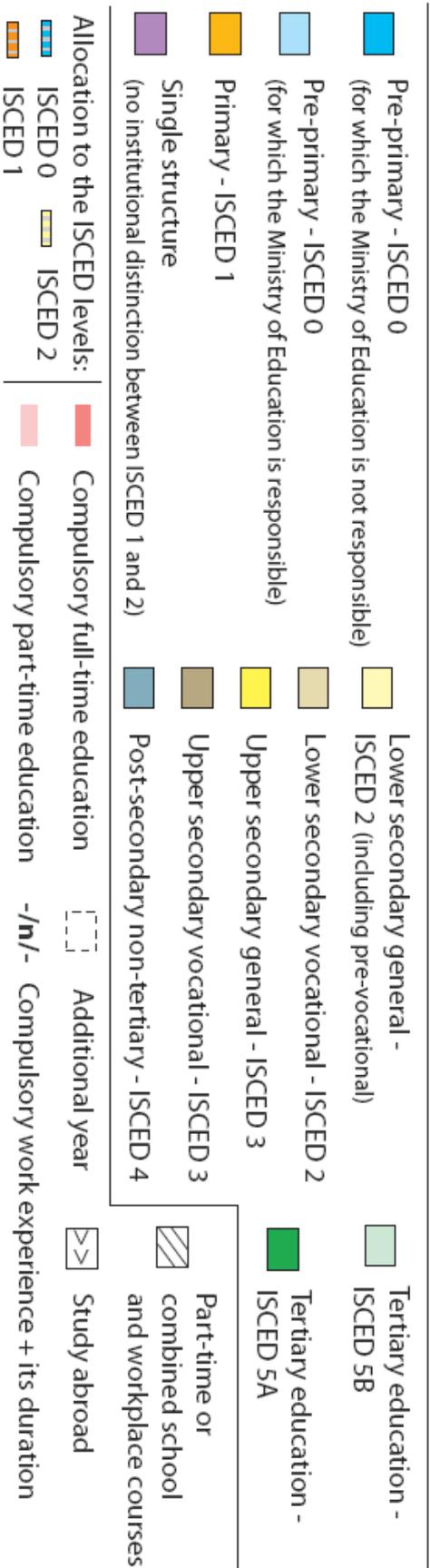
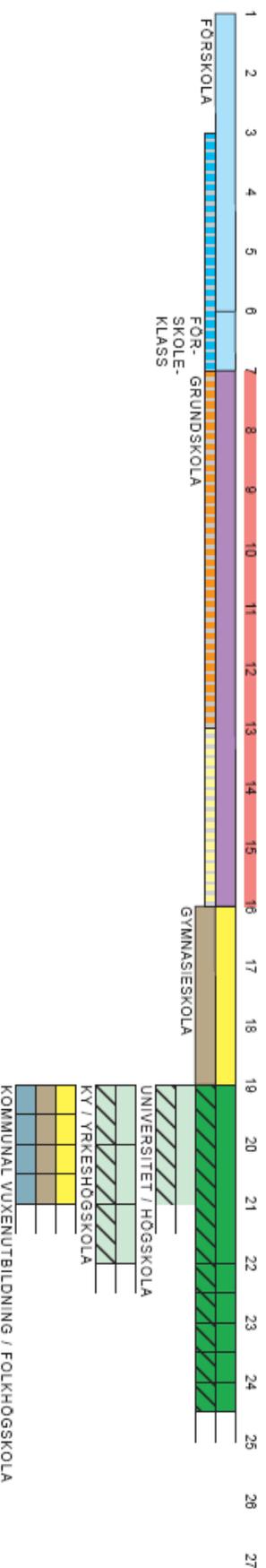
The Swedish school system is organised in three levels:

- **Pre-primary education** (typical ages 1-6). Preschool is offered by municipalities for children aged one to five whose parents work or study. Municipalities also have the obligation to offer preschool classes for six-year-olds. These are usually organised within compulsory schools. Attendance of preschool classes is voluntary, but 96% of all six-year-olds attend.
- **Compulsory education** (typical ages 7-16). Children usually begin their compulsory schooling at age seven though early admission at age six is possible at the request of parents. Compulsory education lasts for nine years and comprises both primary and lower secondary education (ISCED 1 and 2). Participation is mandatory and free of charge.
- **The special school for the deaf and hearing impaired** The special school is an optional school form for children with deafness or hearing impairment, severe language disturbance or visual impairment in combination with additional functional disorders. It comprises 10 school years<sup>1</sup> and is to be an equivalent alternative to regular compulsory school as far as possible. The certificate awarded upon completion of this special school is the same as the regular one. Very few pupils attend this school form.

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<sup>1</sup> Is changed to 9 years in the new education act.

## 1.1 Organisation of the initial education and training system



- **Compulsory school for children with intellectual disabilities**  
Compulsory school for children with intellectual disabilities comprises two parallel types of optional school forms - comprehensive school for children with intellectual disabilities, and the "training school" for those with profound intellectual disabilities. Students are entitled to a voluntary tenth school year to broaden or deepen their knowledge. Around 1,3 per cent of the pupils attend this school form.
  
- **The Sami school** The Sami school corresponds to the first 6 years of compulsory school. Education in the Sami school is to provide Sami children with schooling that has a Sami orientation but which otherwise corresponds to schooling up to and including year 6 of regular compulsory school. Sami children attend regular compulsory school in years 7-9 and this can be provided with integrated Sami schooling at their compulsory school if they wish. Very few pupils attend this school form.
  
- **Upper secondary education** (typical ages 16-19). Upper secondary education comprises 17 national programmes lasting for three years. These programmes have national decided syllabi and overall learning outcomes are decided at national level. Of the 17 programmes, 4 are considered to be mainly preparing for further studies and 13 are considered mainly vocationally oriented. All national programmes include the same eight core subjects. In addition, there are programme-specific subjects, optional courses and project work. There are also specially designed local programmes, which combine subjects from the various national programmes, and individual programmes made for students not eligible for national programmes (i.e. have not reached the grade "Pass" in the necessary subjects in compulsory school). While upper secondary education is not compulsory, 99% of an age cohort choose to enrol an upper secondary programme. See section II step 3 for coming reforms in upper secondary education
  
- **Upper secondary education for individuals with learning disabilities.** The upper secondary school for individuals with learning disabilities is contribution-free and a voluntary form of schooling that young people with intellectual disabilities can choose (and almost all of these young people do so) after completion of the Compulsory school for children with intellectual disabilities or the School for children with profound intellectual disabilities. The upper secondary school for individuals with

learning disabilities offers national, specially designed and individual programs. There are eight national programmes. There are also two programmes for students who are not able or willing to take a national program. The different programmes are mainly oriented on professional preparation.

- **Upper secondary schools for the deaf, hearing-impaired and physically disabled students.** There are also special national upper secondary schools for the deaf, hearing-impaired and physically disabled students. However, the principles of equal education for students with special needs, as well as the striving for integration, applies to upper secondary school as it does to compulsory school. The support measures available in compulsory school are also made available in upper secondary. Most youths with functional disabilities attend regular upper secondary schools. The national programmes for the learning disabled are fewer in number and specially oriented to vocational training. Upper secondary programmes for the learning disabled are four years in length.

- **Adult education.** There are many types of adult education in Sweden, with a number of different organisational structures. It can consist of anything from national or municipal adult education to employability courses and on-the-job training. Publicly-funded adult education includes:

- Municipal adult education, which consists of basic adult education, upper secondary adult education and post-secondary training courses<sup>2</sup>.
- Education for adults with intellectual impairment (sär vux)
- Swedish language training (SFI).
- Another type of adult education is the supplementary education courses, offered outside the public education system, by private organisers. The content are mainly skills in specific occupational fields or traditional craft skills.
- Liberal adult education (folk bildning) is provided by folk high schools (folkhögskolor) and study associations (studieförbund). It is free from central government control and voluntary for its participants. In study associations people take courses outside working hours in many different areas, such as languages, arts, ICT, history, social science, humanities etc with around 1.8 million participants each year. There are also lots of art courses for children. Folk high schools offer both short and longer courses, including courses that provide some qualifications equivalent to those in public secondary education.

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<sup>2</sup> As from 2012 only basic and secondary adult education will be supplied within the municipal adult education framework. For post-secondary studies, education will be offered within the framework of higher vocational education.

- Higher vocational education is post secondary education programmes with a strong link to the labour market. Programmes, ranging from 6 months to 3 years, are developed locally with a strong involvements from employees and receive state grants through the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education. See Section II step 3 concerning reforms in higher vocational education.
- Higher education is provided at universities and university colleges. They offer single-subject courses as well as study programmes. Education is provided at three levels, basic level, advanced level and research level. Higher education is outside the scope of this report and is not further described. For information, please see [www.hsv.se](http://www.hsv.se).

### ***Curricula***

The national curricula for compulsory education<sup>3</sup> and upper secondary education<sup>4</sup> have, besides goals related to knowledge, a strong emphasis on goals in terms of norms and values, such as democratic values, equal rights, and opportunities for everyone irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, religion or sexual identity. There is also strong emphasis on a student's individual development and the development of personal competencies such as of the ability to cooperate and communicate with others, think critically and creatively, etc. The goals related to knowledge, are defined in four dimensions: facts, understanding, skills and accumulated experience.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=1070>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=1072> and <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/1264/a/6259>

2. Please describe the type and number of schools in your country and their governance structure (the different ministries and levels of government involved, and the extent of public and private provision, university autonomy, etc).

**Table 1: Distribution of student numbers by type and level of school 09 or 09/10**

Sector	Age range of students	No. of schools	No. of students	No. of teachers/	
Preschool education (09/10)				People	Full time
- Preschool	1-5	9 866	466 080	93 227	83 715
- Preschool class	6-7	3 773	100 283	8 397	6 122
Compulsory education (09/10)					
- Compulsory school	7-16	4 660	891 727	97 079	85 559
- Special school	7-17	8	500	343	302
- the Sami school	7-13	5	166	30	25
- School for children with intellectual disabilities	7-19	722	12 673	8 662	7 392
Upper secondary education (09/10)					
- Upper secondary school	16-20	976	394 771	38 726	34 064
- School for students with intellectual disabilities	16-20	269	9 412		
- Adult ed.(2009)	20-			Tot 4 868	Tot 3 192
- Basic adult ed.,		277	14 816	=	=
- Upper secondary adult education		316	64 068	=	=
- Post-secondary training courses.		88	3 638	=	=
- Education for adults with intellectual impairment			4 868	455	279
- Swedish tuition for Immigrants (SFI).	16-	296	91 237	2 617	2062

Source: The Swedish National Agency for Education

Since the beginning of 1990s, the organisation of the Swedish education system has been highly decentralised. The central government holds the overall responsibility for schooling and is in charge of developing the curricula, national objectives and guidelines for the education system. Within this framework, the municipalities and independent providers are responsible for implementing educational activities, organising and operating school services, allocating resources and ensuring that the national goals for education are met. The organisation of schooling within municipalities is further decentralised with a large degree of autonomy delegated to school districts and individual schools. Responsibility for budget allocation and organisation of teaching is left to the school head.

The main responsibility for preschool activities, child care for school children, schools and adult education lies with the municipalities, whose responsibilities include distributing resources and organizing education such that students are able to achieve the national goals. On the basis of this municipal input and the goals and guidelines set out in the steering documents, individual schools, preschools and leisure-time centres can then choose work methods suited to their activities and local conditions.

#### ***Educational administration bodies***

The Ministry of Education and Research (Utbildningsdepartementet)

The Ministry of Education and Research has a staff of about 200. The great majority are non-political officials who stay on in the Ministry in the event of a change of government or minister. The Ministry is headed by Jan Björklund, who is Minister for Education and Deputy Prime Minister. Nyamko Sabuni, Minister for Gender Equality and Deputy Minister for Education, also belong to the Ministry. Working directly under their Ministers the State Secretaries lead work in the Ministry. The Ministry also has political advisers and press secretaries, who belong to the political staff of their Minister. The press secretaries are responsible for contacts with journalists. Unlike other officials in the Government Offices, ministers and political appointees leave their posts when there is a change of government.

The Ministry's divisions handle day-to-day work on the Ministry's various policy issues, with the assistance of the Legal Secretariat. The divisions process business prior to Government decisions. One of their most important tasks is to produce material to support government bills in their sphere of responsibility. The divisions also handle contacts with the agencies sponsored by the Ministry. The Ministry has three secretariats that assist the Ministry's leadership and divisions in matters such as administration, information, international coordination and legal review.

In dealing with important issues of current interest, the Government may choose to appoint either a committee of inquiry or a single person, known as an inquiry chair, to conduct an inquiry into the issue. When the work has been completed, the results are published in one or more reports in the Swedish Government Official Reports (SOU) series. Work on government bills sometimes builds on these reports.

Each Ministry is responsible for a number of government agencies, foundations, associations and companies. These bodies handle the day-to-day work of central government administration. The Government decides on the objectives, guidelines and distribution of resources for their operations through appropriations and appropriation directives. However, the Government does not control their application of laws or their decisions on specific matters concerning the exercise of official authority towards an individual person or a municipality.

#### ***The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket)***

The Swedish National Agency for Education is the largest central authority in the school area. The authority is responsible for pre-school activities, school-age childcare, compulsory school, upper secondary school and the municipal adult education. The Agency puts forward proposals and monitors education. One of the main tasks of the Swedish National Agency for Education is to examine the quality and outcome of education in municipalities and grant-aided independent schools, as well as to supervise their activities. The Swedish National Agency for Education develops steering documents, e.g. syllabuses and grading criteria, and is responsible for examination issues concerning grant-aided independent schools. It also allocates funds to universities and university colleges for research into the school system, for the training programme for school heads, for competence development of teachers and personnel within the school

on topics such as reforms, as well as for awarding teaching scholarships for competence development of individual teachers.

***The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (Skolinspektionen)***

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate ensures that local authorities and independent schools follow existing laws and regulations. The Schools Inspectorate is the central agency responsible for pre-school, the welfare of schoolchildren, schools management and adult education, and the aim of the Agency is to ensure the equal right of all children to a good education, in a safe environment. The Schools Inspectorate conducts regular supervision of all schools. The Schools Inspectorate is also responsible for granting licenses to new independent schools. Furthermore, it decides on applications from independent schools for entitlement to grants and also monitors national supervision of upper secondary schools.

***The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (Specialpedagogiska Skolmyndigheten)***

The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools, is the central authority responsible for allocating public funds for special pedagogical issues. The institute creates and provides support to school organisers on special pedagogical issues related to disabilities.

***The Swedish Board for Study Support (Centrala studiestödsnämnden, CSN)***

The Swedish Board for Study Support, is responsible for the allocation and repayment of financial support for studies at different levels

***The Swedish National Council of Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet)***

Commissioned by the Government and the Riksdag, the Council allocates state appropriations to adult education associations and folk high schools, provides financial records and annual reports to the Government, follows up and evaluates liberal adult education activities. The Swedish National Council of Adult Education also works on behalf of its members by monitoring liberal adult education policy, providing information and co-ordinating international work.

### ***Schools are run by municipalities or are independent***

The vast majority of compulsory schools in Sweden are municipally run, which means that the municipality is the responsible authority.<sup>5</sup> Typically children attend a municipal school close to their home. However, students and their parents have the possibility to choose another municipal school, or a school that is run independently, by companies, foundations etc. Grant-aided independent schools are open to all children and must be approved by the Schools Inspectorate. Teaching in independent schools is more or less steered by the same objectives as those of the municipal school, but can have an orientation that differs from that of the municipal schools. If a school does not comply with current regulations, the Schools Inspectorate can withdraw its permit. In international comparison, regulations for municipal schools and independent schools are very similar, with regarding ownership. The education act applies both to public as well as independent schools.

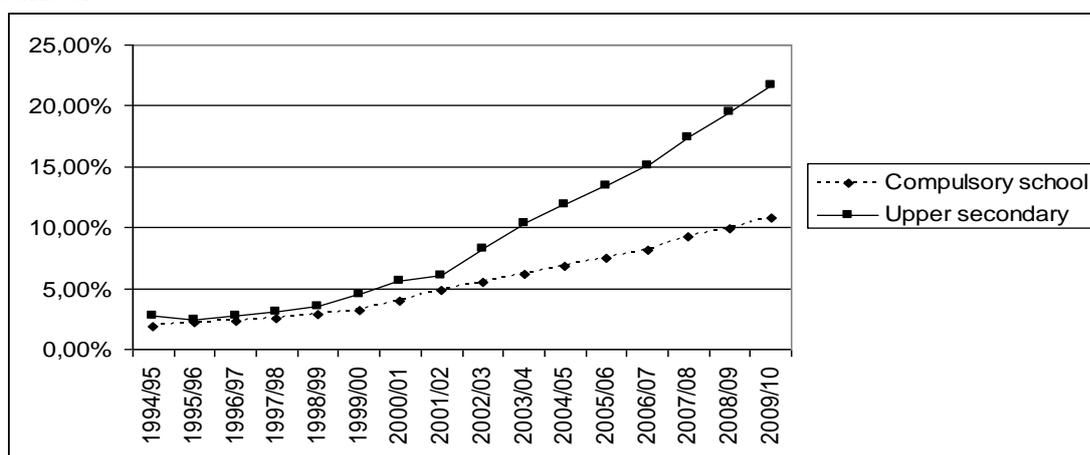
The regulations for independent schools and school choice changed in the beginning of the 1990s. Since then, the proportion of students in independent schools has grown considerably and general rules for school choice, for independent schools as well as for different municipal schools, have been introduced throughout the country. This has made school population dependent on attraction of the school rather than the living conditions of the population in the school's area. In later years, between-school variations of results has increased which is much debated in Sweden. The Riksdag has commissioned the government to appoint a committee to investigate in what way these changes have had an impact. In the school year 1994-95, about 2% of all Swedish students in compulsory education (approximately ages 6-15) were enrolled in grant-aided independent schools, whereas in 2009/10 the percentage had grown to over 10%. An even stronger growth can be observed in upper secondary school, where the pupil percentage has grown from 3% to 22% during the same period. There are grant-aided independent schools in about 210 of the 290 municipalities in Sweden. The urbanized areas of southern and central Sweden, in particular in the Greater Stockholm area, have the highest concentration of grant-aided independent schools, because the number of pupils make it possible to offer a variety of schools.

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<sup>5</sup> There are 290 Swedish municipalities. Each municipality is responsible for the use of taxes within several areas such as technical services (water, sanitary), elderly care, child care and schooling. The municipality has a local parliament directly elected by its inhabitants and several boards with a political composition that also reflects local opinions.

It is also in these areas where it is most common to go to another school than the school closest to your home, whether it is another municipal school or an independent one. Finally, the concentration of grant-aided independent schools are higher in well-off areas.

Figure 3. The proportion of students enrolled in grant-aided independent schools of all pupils in compulsory upper secondary school



Source: Skolverket<sup>1</sup>

The completion rates are lower in independent schools after three years of schooling. 73 per cent of the students who started an education in an independent upper secondary school 2003 received a learning certificate within three years, compared to 77 per cent of the students in municipally run schools. After four years the share was 80 per cent compared to 83 percent.

Municipalities are obliged to provide young people between the ages of 16 and 20 with an all-round choice of programmes, either under their own auspices, or in conjunction with other organisers. The national curriculum lays down the tasks and overall goals of the upper secondary school, as well as the values that should underlie teaching. The Swedish Parliament (Riksdag) decides which programmes are offered. The Government sets out the programme goals of each national programme in upper secondary school. The programme goals describe the purpose and objective of the course. The Swedish National Agency for Education adopts syllabi setting out the goals of teaching in each individual subject and course.

According to the Municipal Adult Education Ordinance municipalities are obliged to provide adult education. Under the ordinance, the content of municipal adult education is based on the needs and abilities of the individual. Municipal adult education and upper

secondary schools share the same curriculum and the same goals of the national syllabus.

### ***Steering documents***

The Swedish school system is a goal-based system with a high degree of local responsibility. As mentioned before, the main responsibility for education activities lies with the municipalities and authorities responsible for independent schools. Various steering documents are used to steer activities, i.e., Education act, school curriculum course syllabi, etc. that are drawn up at different levels within the school system.

The overall national goals are set out by Swedish Parliament and Government in:

- The Education Act
- Curriculum for the Preschool (Lpfö 98)
- Curriculum for the Compulsory School System, the Preschool Class and the Leisure-time Centre (Lpo 94)
- Curriculum for the Non-compulsory School System (upper secondary and municipal adult education) (Lpf 94)
- Course syllabi for compulsory school
- Program goals for upper secondary school

The Swedish National Agency for Education draws up and takes decisions on:

- Most course syllabi for upper secondary school etc.
- Grading criteria for all types of courses and subjects

### ***General recommendations***

The National Agency for Education is, on behalf of the Government, continually developing and revising syllabi, grading criteria and other steering documents to ensure that they help to improve equivalence and achievement of goals, as well as reflect the needs motivated by developments in society and the workplace and the needs of individuals.

The Agency also follows up how in practice, the steering documents are helping, to meet the national goals, including the goal on equivalent education throughout the country. The agency also evaluates the knowledge of responsible authorities or institutions regarding the content and purpose of steering documents.

### *Special support*

The Swedish Education Act states that all children shall have equal access to education, and that all children shall enjoy this right regardless of gender, residence or social or economic factors. Special support shall also be given to students who have difficulty with schoolwork. Most students with a need for special support are taught in regular classes in compulsory and upper secondary schools. There are also a certain number of special remedial classes for students with severe functional disabilities, and for students with social and emotional problems. Students with learning disabilities have the right to attend a special school form (särskola), instead of the regular compulsory school.

The Swedish National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools is responsible for providing special needs support to students, parents, schools, and municipalities, so that functionally disabled students may receive the best education possible. This support is aimed for children with hearing and vision impairments, children with physical or multiple disabilities, as well as disabled immigrant students, vision-impaired preschool children and deaf-blind adults.

### *Main forthcoming reforms.*

#### *A new Education Act - for knowledge, choice and security*

The new Education Act will come into force on 1 July 2011. The current Education Act of 1985 has become out of date and does not reflect actual conditions in the school sector, above all as regards the position of independent schools. The new Act is better adapted to a management by objectives approach in the school system and to the conditions in the school sector and to the current division of responsibilities between central and local government.

#### *Preschool*

A revised The curriculum for preschool has been revised in order to reinforce the pedagogical task for preschool, particularly when it comes to children's linguistic and mathematical development. The revised curriculum will be introduced on 1 July 2011.

***Compulsory school***

Integrated curricula with new syllabuses and knowledge requirements for compulsory schools and equivalent types of school will be introduced in fall 2011. There are going to be integrated curricula for each type of school, containing the fundamental values and tasks of the school, overall goals and guidelines for education and syllabuses. The fundamental values and tasks of schools and the overall goals and guidelines will be the same for all types of school. New syllabuses in all subjects will be introduced at compulsory schools, compulsory schools for pupils with learning disabilities, special needs schools and Sami schools.

Grades from grade 6 will be introduced in fall 2012. The government believes that grades from grade 6 will strengthen the follow-up of students' result and at an early stage identify students who experience difficulties in achieving the goals. The new six-level grading scale is to be used.

***A new grading scale***

A new grading scale for the compulsory school, the upper secondary school, and municipal adult education will be introduced in fall 2011. The new grading scale will contain six levels and a seventh coding. The five levels A-E will denote pass results and F will denote a non-pass result. If material for the assessment is entirely non-existent due to substantial absenteeism, a grade will not be awarded, and this will be designated by a horizontal line.

***Upper secondary school***

A Commission has been appointed to review the future structure of the upper secondary school. According to the directives of the Commission, students in the upper secondary school should be offered three different education pathways: programs preparatory for further studies, vocationally oriented programs, and apprenticeship training. The commission submitted its report (Future Route – Reform of the Upper Secondary School) (Framtidsvägen – en reformerad gymnasieskola SOU 2008:27) in March 2008. This proposed, amongst other things, the introduction of an upper secondary certificate to prepare for higher education, and a vocational certificate which could be done either through vocational education at school, or through an upper secondary apprenticeship programme where at least half of the studies take place through learning located at the workplace. It is also proposed that the current 17 national programmes be replaced by five programmes preparatory for higher education and 14 vocational programmes.

The report was circulated to a large number of stakeholders for comments during summer 2008. The Riksdag has decided on the reform in spring 2009 and it will come into effect by autumn 2011.

### ***A new teacher education***

The new teacher education will start in the 2011/12 school year. Today's degree of Bachelor/Master of Education will be replaced by four new professional degrees: a degree in pre-school education, a degree in primary school education, a degree in subject education and a degree in vocational education.

## **Chapter 2: Fair and inclusive education**

3 Referring to the diagram of the education system you provided in question 1, please describe at which levels student selection takes place.

Similar to other Nordic countries, Sweden has a tradition of a unified and lengthy compulsory school where tracking takes place relatively late. In compulsory education, pupils choose a second foreign language, mostly in school year six (at 12 years of age), and there may also be some minor choices, depending on each school's organisation. Structural choice of paths do not occur until entering upper secondary at 16 years of age.

a. Please describe current practices and institutional arrangements that determine access to quality preschool education and care and how they are related to socio-economic factors.

### ***Aim of the preschool education***

The purpose of the preschool is to provide pedagogical stimulation at an early stage and the pedagogical task of the preschool should be strengthened as the child develops. The preschool class plays an important role in assisting the transition between preschool and school.

Activities in both the preschool and the preschool class must be continuously developed so that children receive competent support in their language development, amongst other things. The development of language is the means of acquiring an understanding of the surrounding world. The linking of language development and concept formation is needed to develop both good reading skills and e.g. develop understanding in mathematics. Different studies over many years have shown that an early starting point of preschool (or

equivalent) have a favourable effect on the child's development and that children who attend preschool subsequently achieve better outcomes in school.

### ***Organisation of the preschool education***

Municipalities are obliged to provide preschool or pedagogical care (e.g. family day-care) to children aged from one year and up. Preschools are open from morning to evening throughout the year, closing only at weekends and on national holidays. Preschools, like childcare for school children, have two tasks. One is to help provide an environment that stimulates children's development and learning, and the other one is to enable parents to combine parenthood with work or studies. Unemployed parents or those on parental leave from work have the right of a place for their children at least three hours a day or 15 hours a week.

Preschools are publicly funded and have low fees irrespective of parental financial position. There is a nationally set maximum fee that parents pay for preschool services, although this is not decided by law, but through a government grant to the municipalities that do not charge higher fees (which no municipalities do). In addition, all three-, four- and five-year olds have the right to preschool for at least 525 hours a year, free of charge for the parents.

The municipalities are obliged to provide allowances, i.e. childcare vouchers, to approved services as independent run preschools, out-of-school centres and alternative forms of educational care, if they are approved by the municipality and if the activities maintain the same level of quality and safety as that of corresponding public sector services. . The voucher system is not a set sum of money, but means that the municipality should fund different forms of educational care in the same way as the municipal preschools. The aim of the childcare voucher system is to give parents greater freedom of choice since different forms of childcare will be more available.

### ***Curriculum of preschool education***

The preschool has had its own curriculum for around 12 years which was revised in 2010 and will coming to force in July 1 2011<sup>6</sup>. The preschool is to be characterised by a pedagogical approach, where care, socialisation and learning together form a coherent whole. Pedagogical activities should be carried out so that they stimulate and challenge the child's learning and development. The aim of the revision was to strengthen the pedagogical task with more clarified

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<sup>6</sup> See Section II step 8 concerning the revision of the curriculum for the preschool.

and increased goals for language and communication, mathematics, natural science and technology. The guidelines for the responsibility of the preschool teacher and the work team has been specified. Preschool teachers has the overall pedagogical responsibility for children's development and learning.

A new section with guidelines for follow up, evaluation and development has been added as well as a new section for the responsibility for the head of the preschool. It is the general development of the pre-school that should be evaluated, the curricula do not give goals for individual children to be attained. The aim is to make the preschool even more instructive and to give the preschool teachers responsibility according to their education. The Preschool Boost – in service training (university courses) is arranged for preschool teachers, child minders and pedagogical leaders in preschool. The Boost, financed by the Government, started in 2009 and will go on until 2011. The aim is to give the staff in preschool more competence to work with the new clarifications in the curriculum.

b. At what age are students asked to choose between general and vocational tracks? At what level of the education system does it occur?

Since there are no tracks in the Swedish compulsory school, the first time students have to choose between general and vocational tracks is when they apply to upper secondary school. The typical age when students begin upper secondary school is 16. Upper secondary school offers various types of programmes. In 2009, 44 percent of the students were enrolled in general programmes and the rest in vocational programmes.

A comprehensive reform of the upper secondary school is now in the implementation phase. The reformed upper secondary school will provide vocational programmes more directed to the labour market. A vocational program will result in a vocational degree. The preparatory programmes for higher education, however, provide basic eligibility for higher education at the first cycle level, and aim at a higher education degree. Students attending a vocational programme will have the right to choose subjects that provide eligibility for higher education. The current 17 national programmes will be replaced by five preparatory programmes for higher education and 14 vocational programmes. There will also be two types of vocational education, school based VET as well as apprenticeships. The main difference between the two types of upper secondary VET education is that education for apprentices will be work place based for at least half of the time. The reform will come into force by autumn 2011.

c. To which extent are students able to change paths underway? Please describe the degree of flexibility of the system: second chance schools and programmes, re-entry, multiple pathways, diversification of programme offer, qualification and certification system.

### ***Changing paths***

It is relatively common for Swedish upper secondary students to change programs, and it usually goes smoothly. The municipalities are taking a great responsibility in ensuring that most students are attending the programs they applied for.<sup>7</sup> The law does not guarantee any such rights for the students, but the municipal has a specific responsibility for monitoring youths, which is an implication for the municipality to make efforts. If the student are not admitted to the programme he or she wants to attend, the student may apply again the next year. The course design allows the students to take their completed courses to a new program.

### ***Second chance schools and programmes and multiple pathways and diversification of programmes***

Students who are not eligible to apply to a national or specially designed programme because they have not received the grade “Pass” in the relevant subjects in compulsory education, are directed to the individual programme. The individual programme is based on students’ needs and can vary greatly both in terms of length and content. Each student has an individual study plan. A municipality has the right to establish an individual programme to which students may apply (PRIV). The aim of this alternative is to enable a student to start education on courses in a national programme at the same time as having the opportunity to study one or more of the subjects from the compulsory school where necessary. This applies mostly to students who only lack a final “Pass” grade from compulsory education in a few subjects before they may continue their studies in a national programme. Having received the grades necessary, the student can then be admitted to a national or a specially designed programme. The student is then credited with the courses completed in the individual programme. Students who need more support may receive education in a more individualised way.

The individual programme can also be customized to incorporate different content for young persons who have recently arrived in Sweden e.g. special introductory courses in Swedish as a second language and social studies.

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<sup>7</sup> 52 percent of students were admitted to their first choice fall semester 2010. Source: Skolverket

### ***Qualification and certification system***

An individual study plan is created for each student in upper secondary schools. It contains the programme and courses the student has chosen. It must also state whether the student adheres to a full, expanded or reduced program. The individual plan should be continuously monitored.

Students have the right to repeat, or undergo a specific examination, in all courses and project work contained in the student's individual study plan. This is valid, however, only if the student has not previously received at least a "Pass" grade for the course.

d. Does the system include schools and colleges which allow a second chance for young people who have previously dropped out of school to seek and obtain upper secondary and [tertiary qualifications]? If yes, how is the second-chance education organised?

Adult education has a long well-established tradition in Sweden. It provides individuals with the opportunity of developing and strengthening their knowledge and skills, for example in working life or for further studies for those who are not eligible for such an education. Upper secondary education and post upper secondary education for adults parallel with higher education, are also important in providing a vocational education at a basic or more advanced level. Those who have the least education are given priority in the selection.

Upper secondary adult education share syllabi with, and is equivalent to upper secondary education for youths. The education consists of courses and the students themselves decide the number and combinations of courses and subjects and the rate of progress. Many adult students take only one or two courses. Grades are awarded after each completed course. It is recommended that teachers use centrally approved examinations to aid them in their assessment.

Another variant of second chance education in Sweden is provided by the current 150 folk high schools that are spread throughout the country. Folk high schools offer courses for adults from the age of 18. The folk high schools are not guided by national curricula, but instead are free to shape their activities on their own. The length of the courses varies from a few days up to several years. The long-term courses are generally 1-3 years, some of which can provide knowledge equivalent to upper secondary school and thereby also qualify participants for university studies.

#### 4. How is the selection carried out at school level?

The municipality is obliged to ensure that every child of school age residing in the municipality have a school place in a municipal school. In public schools the students living closest to the school has a priority. The municipality takes into account the parents/guardians selection of school as far as possible, provided that other students eligible placement in a school close to home are not compromised. (Education Act, Chapter 4, § 6) If the school do not have a possibility to admit all applicants, students that would otherwise have an excessively long way to school have a priority.

Grant-aided independent schools are allowed to other admissions rules than municipal schools, if there are more applicants than available places. Accepted selection criteria are the date of notification, sibling priority and geographic closeness. The National school inspectorate monitors admission procedures. Recently there has been a proposal that the date of notification at popular schools should be replaced by drawing lots among the candidates to the same school. Drawing of lots are a more equitable method if you want to avoid parental background to decide the chances to get a place in an attractive school.<sup>8</sup>

#### ***Compulsory school***

Grades are given from the eighth grade in compulsory school. Grades per subject are set by the teachers and can be one of the following: Pass (G), Pass with Distinction (VG) and Pass with Special Distinction (MVG). A student that fails in a subject will not be graded in that subject. Teachers base their assessment on stated achievement goals. In principle, the assessment criteria are absolute, not relative, but there is no guarantee that grading standards are equal across schools. About 90% of the student population complete the ninth grade with eligibility for upper secondary schooling, i.e. having obtained at least a "Pass" grade in Swedish/Swedish as a second language, English and Maths. Of all the youths leaving compulsory school, 99% continue. During beginning of the spring semester of ninth grade students apply to a programme at the upper secondary school. A preliminary admission takes normally place in April, based on autumn grades. Final intake takes place during the summer based on the final grades.

See Section II step 6 concerning the new grading scale; see Section II step 5 concerning grades from school year six.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.sns.se/document/zo\\_ar\\_med\\_forandringar\\_i\\_skolan.pdf](http://www.sns.se/document/zo_ar_med_forandringar_i_skolan.pdf)

### ***Upper secondary schools***

All municipalities in Sweden are by law obliged to offer upper secondary schooling to all students that have completed compulsory school. The upper secondary school consists of 17 programmes; all of them last for three years and provide eligibility for post-secondary education. All municipalities do not offer all programs but may do so in cooperation with one or more neighbor municipalities, and the student then has the right to attend his or her chosen program in another municipality, financed by the municipality where he or she resides. Cross-municipality commuting is relatively common.

A little more than 50 % of all upper secondary schools are public schools run by the local municipality, but there are also independent schools. In general, independently run schools offer education corresponding to the public upper secondary schools, and they use grade-based admission rules. These schools are approved by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate and receive municipal grants. There are also a few schools that have tuition fees and selection rules other than grades. These schools are not entitled to municipal funding.

5. What is the practice in your country and what are the policies in your country regarding grouping of students by ability? Are they grouped both within schools, and between them? At what level of the education system does it occur?

### ***Legislation***

Integration is a leading organisational principle in school statutes in Sweden. The legislation for compulsory schools stipulates integration/inclusion as a guiding organisational principle for teaching students with special needs. This principle is founded on the notion that any group of students is heterogeneous in various ways and that this in itself ought to be valued and be viewed as an asset in the creation of fruitful learning environments (Vinterek, 2006). This perspective regards difference as an asset in the teaching process.

The new Education Act (2010:800), in power as from 15 August 2010 regarding education starting after 1 July 2011, states in § 9 "Tests and samples may not be a condition for admission or selection to or within a school unit. Tests and samples may not be a condition for continuing education at a school unit or in the student group that the student belongs. "

Special needs support ought primarily to be given within the classroom or group to which the student belongs (Ordinance for compulsory education).

### ***Special needs support and streaming***

The scope of special needs support in compulsory schools increased during the mid-1990s. Teachers themselves describe this increase as one of the most tangible changes in teaching in compulsory schools (Skolverket, 2006). A study by the University of Gothenburg (Giota and Lundborg, 2007) has shown that 40 percent of students born in 1982 and 1987 were given special needs support at some time during their schooling and that this proportion increased during the 1990s. The study showed that special needs support was introduced early for the majority of students, most often by 3rd or 4th grade. Another study (Emanuelsson and Persson, 2003) confirmed that a large proportion of students (slightly under 40 percent) in compulsory schools have, at some time, been given special needs support. However, despite several studies seeming to indicate a large number of students receiving special needs support, other studies point to students not gaining access to such support, despite having been assessed as being in need of special support (Skolverket, 2008b).

The Swedish National Agency for Education has found that a student's need for support is influenced by classroom practice and teaching methods as well as by how schools organise teaching (Skolverket, 2010) "Schools often deal with students' special needs through streaming, that is, in the form of special classes etc. A number of other studies indicate that other forms of streaming within comprehensive compulsory schools are relatively common. Four out of ten compulsory school students participate in streamed groups differentiated by attainment levels in one or several subjects (Skolverket, 2010) Streaming by attainment level means that students are separated into various groups based on levels of attainment. Streaming is most common in mathematics, Swedish and English classes. When the curriculum of 1994 came into force, streaming by attainment level (in the form of general and special courses) in compulsory schools, as a principle for how schools are organised, was prohibited. However, in practice, streaming has been retained in many municipalities. The Swedish National Agency for Education has stipulated that streaming and the creation of special needs classes must be both temporary and continually evaluated in order to avoid so-called persistence effects where streaming policies become permanent.

In a study, data from international studies was collected with the aim of comparing consequences for student performance of early and delayed tracking in different school systems (Hanushek and Wössman, 2006). The researchers found that early tracking leads to increased inequality in the sense that variation in performance increases between fourth and eighth grade. Despite delayed tracking in Sweden, variation in performance between these grade levels increases even here, which was not the case in other countries with delayed tracking

onto other educational pathways. That Sweden diverges from the prevailing pattern would seem to indicate that other differentiating factors are at work on different levels in Swedish compulsory schools. Variation between schools has increased and the manner in which schools organise and deliver instruction would seem to indicate that a new form of tracking and streaming has evolved in compulsory comprehensive schools. This is confirmed by PISA 2006 where tracking and streaming was much more common in Sweden than in Norway and Finland.

6. Do parents in your country have school choice?  
Please describe

The vast majority of compulsory schools in Sweden are municipal. The typical situation is that a child attends a municipal school close to home. However, the students and their parents also have the possibility to choose a different school, which could be either municipal or independent. If a student has special needs, the municipality may place him in a certain school.

Grant-aided independent schools are open to all students, the schools are not entitled to charge fees, and they must also be approved by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. Their work is carried out within the framework of the Education Act, the curricula and various ordinances. As mentioned above, independent schools must be open to all. Sibling priority, waiting time and geographic closeness to the dwelling is allowed as admissions rules when there are more applicants than places.

7. What are the financial instruments and fees (public financing of private schools, vouchers, etc)?

All education in the public school system is free of charge for students/participants and is funded entirely by the municipalities.

Grant-aided independent schools that provide education equivalent to that provided in preschool classes, compulsory school and upper secondary school, and who have been approved by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, are entitled to grants from their students' home municipalities. The amount of the grant is to be paid according to the same criteria as the municipality applies when distributing resources to the schools within its own organisation. For independent schools at upper secondary level, the grant for a student on a particular study programme is to be equivalent to what that a student in that programme would cost the home municipality. If the home municipality does not offer the programme, the independent school is to be compensated with an amount that is determined by the Swedish

National Agency for Education which is equivalent to the average national cost of the programme in it's own schools.

8. Please describe guidance and counselling policies and practices. To which extent is it related to the world of work?

According to the Education Act (2010:800) it is the responsibility of the municipality to ensure that students in all school types, except for preschool and preschool classes, shall have access to staff with such expertise that the students need for guidance concerning choices of future education and occupation can be met. In compulsory school around 600 employees (full-time equivalent) and in upper secondary school around 750 employees perform guidance and counselling tasks.

To be permanently employed for study and vocational guidance in the national school system, the applicant shall have completed training intended for such activities. A person not fulfilling these requirements may be employed for study and vocational guidance for a maximum of one year at a time. In addition, each principle organizer must arrange for the competence development of the personnel who are in charge of this education. The competence development (in-service training) of personnel must be planned. According to the curricula, it is the head of the school who is responsible for the results of the school and for the competence development required for personnel to professionally perform their duties.

According to the guidelines from the Swedish National Agency for Education the municipal and school level shall ensure that (Skolverket 2009)

- there is a system and routines for planning, follow-up and evaluation of the goals of career education and guidance, and
- the results of follow-up and evaluation is used to improve the quality of career education and guidance, and allocation of resources.

Furthermore, the head of the school should:

- provide guidelines and prerequisites for career education and guidance so that they become a responsibility of the entire school, whereby the head of the school, teachers, career counselors and other personnel give students what is required to make well-founded decisions concerning their further education and vocation,
- make it clear how the responsibility for career education and guidance are divided between different staff groups, and how teachers, career counselors and other personnel are to cooperate to provide career education and guidance, and
- together with school personnel plan how career education and guidance are to be implemented, followed up and evaluated.

### ***The school and working life***

According to the curricula for the various types of schools, students are to receive support in choosing their continuing education and vocation. This assumes that the school cooperates with working life and the community at large. Furthermore, practical experience of working life stimulates student interest in various professions. The head of the school is responsible for the results and thus has, within a given framework, particular responsibility for promoting collaboration with working life outside of the school so that students receive a good qualitative education and are prepared for a vocation and further education.

In upper secondary school all students at vocational programmes are entitled to working place training at least 15 weeks during the three years of education.

### ***Expansion of upper secondary apprenticeship training***

The Government wishes to see closer linkages between education and working-life in the vocational programs, and has started a pilot project with upper secondary apprenticeship training, in which at least half of the programme is carried out at a workplace. A pilot project is also being carried out with leading cutting edge programmes covering academic areas such as mathematics, science and the humanities.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, the Swedish National Agency for Education has been tasked to establish a Programme Council for each national vocational programme. The purpose of the Programme Council is to advise the National Agency for the work to develop and monitor programs. There should also be a local program council to ensure collaboration between schools and workplaces for students at vocational programmes.

## **Chapter 3: Fair and inclusive practices**

9. Is year repetition used as a tool for weaker students? If so, is it a common practice? Has the extent to which it is used evolved (is it used more, less, or to the same extent)?

Sweden, Denmark and the UK, are the only EU countries that apply automatic progression in the compulsory school (Eurydice). Rather than year repetition the strategy is to continuously support students with difficulties to benefit from the instruction.

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<sup>9</sup> See Section II step 1 concerning when the pilot projects will become permanent reforms

At the end of each school year, students in grades 1-8 in compulsory school will be moved to the next higher grade, unless otherwise determined by the school head after consultation with a student's legal guardian

10. Do the pedagogical approaches within schools and colleges give sufficient weight to the needs of the weaker students?

According to the Education Act, the education of children and youth shall be equal and shall take into account students with special needs: All students should therefore be given opportunities to achieve the expected learning outcomes. To meet the requirement of an education for all, it is required to take into account each student's different abilities and needs. An education for all does not mean that the education should be the same way everywhere or that the school's resources will be shared equally. Consideration must be given to the varying circumstances and needs. The schools have a special responsibility to those students who for various reasons have difficulty in achieving educational goals. Therefore, education can never be the same for everyone.

a. What measures are in place to address this issue (formative assessment, reading recovery programmes, other interventions)?

It is the responsibility of the responsible organizers (municipality or the independent school) to give all students the chance to achieve the goals, according to the Education Act. Students at risk of not achieving the objectives are entitled to receive support. If this need is not observed by the school head, it is possible to complain to the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, which can require the organiser to take actions. In 2010 around 3 000 complains were reported. See Section II step 5 concerning the new Education Act which will further strengthen the rights to support.

If school personnel, a student, student's guardian or other person finds that the student may need special support measures, the principle shall ensure that the need is investigated. If the investigation shows that the student requires special assistance, the school head shall ensure that a development plan is set up for the student in need of the special support. The development plan shall indicate the responsibility of each partner in the development of the student's abilities and knowledge. The development plan will indicate what the needs are, how they can be met and how the measures will be monitored and evaluated.

Municipal preschool, preschool class, compulsory schooling, leisure-time centres and youth centres are often part of the same organisation with a common school-board. Several of these activities are often integrated with the staff organising joint work together. This facilitates a holistic approach to support each student. It is common practice to provide for the students' needs in close co-operation with their parents. The National Curriculum for compulsory school states the importance of the parents' participation in the planning of students' education.

There are regular health-checks in childcare and schools. Health service and psychologists are available for staff, students and parents to consult. Co-operation with services outside the educational system, such as healthcare and social services, has to be approved by and involve the parents of the child concerned.

b. What assistance is offered to teachers that deal with weaker students?

A student who has difficulty following lessons in class can receive support in several ways, for example having a special education teacher support and assist the child in the classroom, or teaching the child in a special remedial group outside the regular classroom. A special needs teacher works to make it easier for children, youths and adults with special needs. The intention is that they should work with staff and management and contribute to the school's educational development, thus ensuring that the school offers the best learning environment possible and providing support and assistance to those students who are in need of special assistance.

Students who are sick for an extended period of time, or who frequently miss school due to illness, are entitled to be taught at the hospital or at the home. This instruction is only given with the consent of a physician. The instruction given at home or in hospital is to correspond as far as possible to regular classroom instruction.

c. What are the provisions for students with special needs?

### ***Preschool***

All pedagogical activities in Sweden should be related to the needs of all children, and children in need of special support should as far as possible receive that care in its original child care group. Most preschools are organised in groups of 15-20 children with three employees to work with them. A third of group consist of children 1-3 years of age only. (The National Agency for Education). This is not, however, regulated at national level. Where children in need of special support attend a group, extra staff can be allocated. If teachers

consider that they themselves have problems meeting the needs of a specific student a conference has to be held with the staff involved to find a solution to the difficulties. The schools have a student-welfare team made up of a representative of the local school-board, the student welfare staff, i.e. a nurse, psychologist, counselor and special education needs teachers.

Health care, social care, fostering and teaching are the major tasks stated in the preschool curriculum. The social development of children takes place in groups. Consequently, the group has an important educational function in child care, and both the individual child and the group are focal points in pedagogical programmes. Diversity is considered as a general standard in this social development and all children should as far as possible, irrespective of their needs, be a part of such a group.

### ***Compulsory education***

The majority of students in need of special educational support are educated in general basic compulsory classes. If this is not possible, the school must indicate very clearly why other educational options for students should be considered. According to the National Curriculum for compulsory education, all compulsory education shall be organised in such a way that individual solutions are possible for all students. This is a way of strengthening the students' influence and personal responsibility, but also a way of taking into account every student's needs and individuality. A student who, for one reason or another, encounters difficulties can receive various forms of support within this organisation.

According to the Education Act (Skollagen 2010:800) all children are entitled to school healthcare and welfare services. The school healthcare and welfare services follow the health developments of all students. The work is primarily preventive, promote the individual development of students and prevent school related problems. School doctors, nurses, psychologists and school councillor work in the school healthcare and welfare service. Students are entitled to at least three health check-ups during compulsory school. Visits to the school healthcare and welfare service are free of charge.

How support is organized varies between schools. Support can, for instance, include variations of the following options (ibid):

- all students in needs of special support have written plans of development set up in co-operation with the students themselves, parents and professionals involved;
- the teachers of the student are consulted by a specialist teacher;

- a specialist teacher or assistant helps the teacher or works with the student concerned for longer or shorter periods within the frames of the activities of the larger group;
- the student receives teaching materials adapted for his or her needs;
- the student leaves the larger group for limited periods to work with a specialist teacher;
- a classroom assistant works with the student in need of special support or in the class of the student concerned;
- the student in need of special support works in a group for students with similar needs for longer or shorter periods within the same organisation;
- teachers are supported by some sort of resource centre at the local level;
- resource centres at the local level may be supported by an advisor at the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools.

#### ***Special schools - Compulsory education for deaf or hearing impaired pupils***

Pupils in special schools have the same right to support as pupils in regular compulsory education. In addition, there are specific support due to their hearing impairment. Support could include variations of the following options:

- the teachers of the student are supported by a resource centre at the local level;
- a specialist teacher works with the student concerned within the frames of the activities of the larger group; this could be a permanent solution or organized for longer or shorter periods;
- the student leaves the larger group for limited periods to work with a specialist teacher;
- resource centers at the local level may be supported by an advisor at the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools.

#### ***Upper secondary education***

Students in upper secondary schools have the same right to special support as students in compulsory school. For students in need of special support technical aid is available from the regional counties and adaptations of teaching materials are provided from the state if such material is not available on the market. Schools and teachers are consulted by local resource centers which in their turn are consulted by the Swedish Institute for Special Needs Education.

Most students with disabilities attend a regular national program. Students who are deaf or have hearing disabilities and students with physical disabilities may attend special upper secondary schools, but this is uncommon.

For those students who have not been able to reach the goals of the compulsory school and are therefore not eligible to apply to a national programme, specific actions are decided within a framework of an individual programme. All students following an individual programme have their own study plan. It is possible to combine school with employment. The goal of the individual programme is to give pupils basic eligibility to enter a national programme, or skills necessary to continue to working life.

See Section II step 4 concerning the individual programmes and introductory programmes in Upper secondary school that will replace the individual program.

### ***Outcomes***

A study from the National Agency for Education and other studies (Skolverket 2010, Von Greiff 2009) show that municipalities distribute resources more or less equally between schools, which means that schools where students, because of socio-economic disadvantage and foreign background etc. have less chance of reaching expected goals are not given extra resources for special needs. One conclusion is that the need for special support is relative and that it becomes more difficult to access extra support in schools where needs are greatest. This is in spite of the fact that the right to special support for students having difficulties in reaching attainment goals is regulated by educational legislation and national curricula. The school head may, however, allocate extra resources within the school's budget. Municipalities may also have resources left at central level, for distribution to students with special needs. If this is the case, and to what amount, vary however between municipalities.

See Section II step 5 concerning the post-secondary training programme for teachers of special needs education; and concerning the reading-writing-arithmetic venture; and concerning the strengthened right to special support.

### ***11. How is school-parent partnership encouraged?***

In compulsory school there is a formalised meeting each semester, "personal development dialogue", where the student and the parents meet the teacher to discuss the student's progress. At the personal development dialogue the teacher provides a written individual development plan including an assessment for every academic subject. The structure of these assessments is not decided at national level, it may be written text, it may be locally decided forms or it may be in the form of grades. As from school year 8, the assessment should be in form of grades. See section II Step 5 concerning assessments.

In addition, the individual development plan shall summarize the efforts necessary for the student to achieve the goals and otherwise

develop as far as possible within the framework of the curriculum and syllabuses. The individual development plan may also include assessments of students' social development as part of the curriculum. Agreements between teacher, student and the student's guardian at the development meeting should always be documented in the development plan. Note that the written information on student's education can also be provided at times other than at a development meeting. Performance reviews will in some cases result in an action.

***a. Are there special measures directed towards migrants and minorities?***

As discussed below, there is a system in place for the equalisation of municipalities' finances. This system has five different parts – income equalisation, cost equalisation, a structural grant, an implementation grant and an adjustment grant/charge. A structural factor that cost equalisation takes into account is the proportion of children and young people with a foreign background who may, for instance, create a greater need for mother tongue support and mother tongue teachers. However, there are no obligations for the municipalities to use the extra resources for e.g. mother tongue teachers.

***Mother tongue tuition***

A municipality is obliged to provide mother tongue education if at least five students demand it and if the municipality can find suitable teachers. Mother tongue tuition can be coordinated between several schools to create large enough groups.

Mother tongue is a separate subject in compulsory and upper secondary school. The goal is that students assimilate the work of the school while developing their bilingual identity and competence. Work will be done in such a way that students' personal development is promoted and their self-esteem is strengthened. The teachers who teach in the mother tongue often come from the same cultural area as the students. Mother tongue teachers must have good knowledge of the Swedish language and Swedish society.

Children and youths who recently arrived in Sweden, and therefore can't sufficiently follow the teaching in Swedish, can receive tuition in their mother tongue. Parents and schools discuss the student's need for counselling. It is the school head who ultimately determines when a student shall be offered tutoring in their mother tongue. All students who speak a language other than Swedish at home can receive study instruction in mother tongue in schools. The national minority languages; Sami, Meänkieli and Romani Chib, Finnish and Yiddish, have expanded rights with regards to the teaching.

***Swedish as a second language***

Students who has a mother tongue other than Swedish and have problems to manage the regular teaching in Swedish are entitled to study the subject Swedish as a second language as a subject. The goal of this subject is to help students develop Swedish both as usual means of communication and as a means of learning in other school subjects.

***b. Is homework support provided? If so, please describe.***

Some municipalities provide voluntary homework support, mostly directed to students with a foreign background.

There is after-school care aimed at all school children 6-12 years old. Leisure-time centres are mainly coordinated with the school. This coordination may apply to staff, premises and pedagogical instruction. Leisure-time centres are available at both municipal and independent schools. The municipalities are responsible for the existence of school-age child care and for ensuring that they are actually offered to the children. Similar activities may be arranged by independent schools.

Leisure-time centres are open before and after school and during all school holidays. They are mainly located close to the schools, or within the school, and cooperation between the teachers and the staff at the leisure-time centre is important to enable the children to combine with recreational activities. Leisure-time centres have the same curriculum (Lpo 94) as the preschool classes and the compulsory school.

See Section II Step 7 concerning the reforms in language introduction, and improved Swedish tuition for immigrants.

See Section II Step 5 concerning the new curriculum.

***c. How are peer effects used?***

Peer effects are not used in any systematically manner in the Swedish school system.

***d. Do teachers receive preparation to teach for inclusion?***

Teacher education is regulated in the Higher Education Ordinance. The ordinance describes what competence and skills the student shall have required during the education. For a teaching qualification the student shall have

- demonstrated the ability to apply the knowledge in subjects or subject areas and about learning and teaching required in the educational activities in which he or she is involved so that all children and young people learn and develop,
- demonstrated the ability to convey and establish basic social and democratic values, and
- demonstrated the ability to convey, establish and apply applicable regulations intended to prevent and counteract discrimination and other demeaning treatment of children and students

Thus, all teachers should have some preparation to teach students from diverse backgrounds. Training is also available for teachers who want to expand their knowledge.

See Section II Step 4 concerning education for newly arrived immigrant pupils; see Section II Step 3 concerning bonus for people who studies Swedish language training for immigrants (SFI)

#### **Chapter 4: Fair and inclusive resourcing**

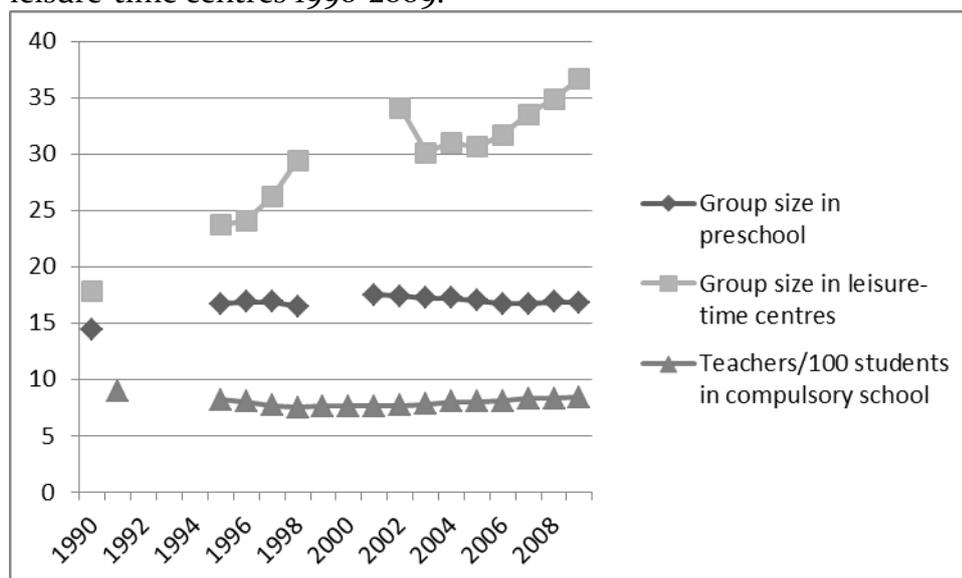
12. Please describe the allocation of educational resources (financial, personnel, learning materials) across sectors and across the lifespan.

School funding is shared between state and municipalities. State funds are paid as what is called 'the general state grant' to the 290 municipalities. Each municipality then allocates resources to individual schools. The pre-school förskolan is financed partly in the same way, but also charges fees to cover part of its costs. The amount for these fees is regulated and a maximum fee determined centrally. The municipalities may receive revenues from municipal taxes to finance municipal activities.

The municipality has its own local board of education, which decides on the allocation of funds between different schools in the municipality. This local body also decides on the funds to be allocated to grant-aided independent schools in the municipality. There are no national regulations on how resources should be allocated between schools; each municipality develops its own allocation system, however the systems are quite similar. Often a basic amount is determined for each pupil and on top of that additional resources are added for pupils with special needs etc. The costs vary between the municipalities (for example the need to provide school transport varies between the vast regions which are sparsely populated and the bigger cities etc.).

There are limited measures that can illustrate how the resources per student have developed over time. However, in three areas, easy to interpret time series are available: pre-school, leisure-time centers and compulsory school. In the case of preschool and compulsory school the resources decreased during the economic crisis in the first part of the 1990s, but since then they have virtually not changed. With regard to leisure-time centers there have been a continuing downsizing since 1990 and group sizes have doubled.

Figure 4: Changes in resources for preschool, compulsory school and leisure-time centres 1990-2009.



Source: The Swedish National Agency for Education

#### Costs 2009:

- Preschool 50,6 billion SEK
- Leisure-time centres 11,9 billion SEK
- Compulsory school 77,4 billion SEK
- Compulsory school for children with learning disabilities 4,3 billion SEK
- Upper secondary school 37,1 billion SEK
- Upper secondary school for children with learning disabilities 2,7 billion SEK
- Municipal adult education 3,7 billion SEK
- Education for adults with intellectual impairment 2 billion SEK
- Swedish tuition for immigrants (sfi) 1,7 billion SEK

#### Costs per enrolled child/student 2009:

- Preschool 114 400 SEK
- Leisure-time centres 33 900 SEK
- Compulsory school 85 900 SEK
- Compulsory school for children with learning disabilities 367 400 SEK
- Upper secondary school 93 800 SEK Upper secondary school for children with learning disabilities 288 600 SEK
- Municipal adult education 44 000 SEK per equivalent full time student.
- Education for adults with intellectual impairment 39,400 SEK
- Swedish tuition for immigrants (sfi) 35 200 SEK

a. Are resourcing decisions taken locally?

Yes, resourcing decisions are taken locally. Funding is provided through resources contributed by the municipalities themselves out of local tax revenues plus a general government grant to municipalities, which is linked to a special equalization system intended to create equal financial conditions for all municipalities and county councils.

For each student at a grant-aided independent schools the municipality shall provide a grant. The grant (basic amount) covers costs for tuition, textbooks and equipment, student welfare and health care, meals, administrative, tax, and local costs. The grant will be determined after the same basis as the municipality uses in the allocation of resources to municipal schools. In addition, the municipality must provide extra grants for students who have extensive special needs or should be offered mother language tuition.

b. Is resourcing in a particular region dependent entirely or partly based on the local tax base?

### ***A general government grant***

Municipal and central government tax revenue forms the basis of funding for the public school system. At the beginning of the 1990s, the rules for the distribution of public funding were revised so that, instead of there being different government grants for different activities and tasks, these were combined into one general government grant. Each municipality receives an amount that has been calculated specifically for that municipality, and then distributes it between its different activities – preschool classes, school, elderly care, social services, technical administration etc. – according to local needs and priorities.

Since 2005, a new system has been in place for the equalisation of municipalities' finances. This system has five different parts – income equalisation, cost equalisation, a structural grant, an implementation grant and an adjustment grant/charge. Income equalisation and cost equalisation are the two most important of the five parts.

### ***Cost equalisation***

The aim of the equalisation system is to put all municipalities in the country on an equal financial footing to deliver equal levels of services to their residents, irrespective of the income of the municipality's residents and other structural factors. Cost equalisation takes into account structural cost differences which can be of two different types. One of these is that the need for municipal activities can vary. For instance, there is a greater need for childcare in municipalities where a relatively high proportion of the population is made up of children. The other is due to variation in the cost of producing a particular service. For example, schools cost more in rural municipalities as

teaching there may require smaller classes and the students often need school transport.

### ***Income equalisation***

Income equalisation means that the state essentially finances the equalisation of taxable incomes between municipalities. The income equalisation grant is calculated on the basis of the difference between a municipality's own taxable income and a tax equalisation base, which, for the municipalities, is equivalent to 115 per cent of the average tax capacity in the country. Municipalities, where the taxable income exceeds this level (115 per cent of the average), pay a fee to the state i.e. they are the net contributors to the system. There are more municipalities receiving a grant from the income equalisation system, than municipalities contributing to it. In 2008, 276 municipalities received a grant and only 14 municipalities paid the charge.

Municipality costs per school vary. In 2009 costs per student for a school year in municipal compulsory schools varied from about 66,000 kronor in the municipality with the lowest per student costs to about 120,000 kronor in the municipality with the highest costs.

13. Do you have a policy to deal with persistently low performing schools?

The Schools Inspectorate ensures that the responsible authority, that is to say the municipality or management of an independent school, follows laws and regulations, which apply to that school. Regular supervision leads to demands for action from the responsible authority when necessary. In the case of independent schools lack of action by the school may result in the withdrawal of the license to operate or entitlement to subsidies. During 2010, the inspectorate received 2 245 complaints, of which 500 resulted in criticism. The number of complaints has increased, which can be explained by an increasing number of independent schools. A handful of licences has been withdrawn the last year.

14. How does the allocation of educational resources relate to the socio-economic intake of students, ethnic origin, or mother tongue? Include not only resources provided by the government but also by families, communities, firms, etc.

In addition to what is mentioned above:

When schools were decentralised, municipalities were given responsibility for allocating resources to compulsory schools. A central notion behind the decentralisation reforms that took place in the beginning of the 1990s was to make resource allocation more effective and to direct resources to where they were most needed. The curricula for compulsory and upper secondary education state that resources are to be allocated on the basis of students' abilities and

needs, with the consequence that resources ought not to be equally distributed everywhere.

The Swedish National Agency for Education has recently conducted a study of the principles on which municipal allocation of resources to compulsory schools are based (Skolverket, 2009b). One central question in the study was whether resources for schools are allocated according to the characteristics of the cohort of students and individual students' circumstances and needs. Results indicate that municipalities often distribute resource according to a capitation fee principle and that the dispensing of compensatory support, allocated on the basis of characteristics of the cohort of students (parental level of education etc), is relatively modest. This means that the resources following the student are set at a specific level, even though some students need more support than others. Municipalities are free to decide on how resources should be distributed, and could therefore decide on a different way of allocating resources, but in practice, a general idea of "student voucher-system" is applied, more or less strictly. Not even in the most segregated municipalities are schools always allocated extra resources. In only 60 percent of the most segregated municipalities were schools compensated on the basis of socio-economic factors, and, where compensation is allocated, it comprises, on average, only a small portion of the total budget (an average of six percent). It is more common that municipalities allocate supplementary resources for special needs. However, the study indicated that special needs resources are evenly distributed between schools within municipalities. Results indicate that schools where students have less chance of reaching expected goals (because of socio-economic disadvantage and foreign background etc.) are not allocated extra resources for special needs. One conclusion is that the need for special support is relative and that it becomes more difficult to access extra support in schools where needs are greatest. In the study, these results are regarded as surprising given that special support for students having difficulty in reaching attainment goals is regulated by educational legislation and national curricula.

Taken as a whole, there is substantial variation between municipalities in terms of resource allocation for schools. Obviously, this kind of variation is an intended consequence in a decentralised system, but with the intention that any variation would derive from local circumstances and students' various possibilities of reaching expected attainment goals. However, within municipalities, the compensatory element is often modest and is not linked to schools' actual attainments, even if there are exceptions.

a. What is the annual tuition expenditure per student at all levels?

See above, question 12

b. Are grants provided? If so, are they tied to academic performance, socioeconomic background, or both?

In order to enable and encourage participation in education, full-time upper secondary students are eligible for financial support up to and including the first half of the calendar year in which they turn 20. This financial support is made up of student grants, extra grants and boarding grants. The student grant, which currently amounts to SEK 1 050 per month, is given to all students without the need to submit an application. Students' and parents' financial situation is examined to determine whether there is a need for an extra grant. Students who attend an independent upper secondary school away from home may, under certain conditions, apply to the Swedish Board for Study Support for a boarding grant.

For students who are studying at a municipal upper secondary school away from home and need accommodation support, the municipality can provide support for accommodation, higher subsistence costs and travel to and from home, depending on how far away from the home the school is established. Adult students studying at compulsory school or upper secondary school level are eligible for study support from the second half of the calendar year in which they turn 20. Study support is made up of a grant and a voluntary loan. People who receive study support and have children are eligible for a supplementary grant. This supplementary grant is intended as extra support and the amount paid depends on how many children the student has. Students can also receive a supplementary loan if they have previously been in gainful employment. Supplementary loans can also be granted to cover certain additional costs, such as tuition fees and dual residence.

15. Please describe how you monitor progress in achieving equity on education.

α. Do you have structures designed to promote fairness and inclusion in education? If so, are there institutions that have a legal mandate to do so?

### ***The tasks and role of the Agency***

The Government and the Parliament specify goals and guidelines for preschool and school through the Education Act, curricula etc. The task of the Swedish National Agency for Education is to work actively for the achievement of these goals. The Agency steers, supports, follows up and evaluates the work of municipalities and schools with the purpose of improving quality and the result of activities to ensure that all students have access to equal education.

Furthermore, the Swedish National Agency for Education collects, analyses and publishes relevant statistics in the sector. The agency follows up the prerequisites of the different activities, how the activities are conducted and how the results develop, by the continual collection of data from the municipalities. This allows comparison of different organisers and activities.

b. Have you set targets for overcoming school failure or achieving improvement in equity in other ways?

The overarching target is that each student shall have the opportunity to reach the goals.

To measure progress in meeting the Europe 2020 goals, five headline targets have been agreed for the whole EU, one of which is in line with overcoming school failure, i.e. reducing school drop-out rates below 10%. To ensure that each EU member state implements the Europe 2020 strategy in a way that fits its particular situation, the targets are being translated into national targets to reflect the level of ambition each is able to make to the wider EU effort. The Swedish national target for school drop-out rates is, for the moment, the same as the EU-target: to reduce it below 10%. See more information in the description of the initiatives linked to *Step 10* in Section II.

c. Which data do you use to measure school failure (e.g. dropout), and how is it calculated? Which data do you use to follow progress in overcoming school failure?

Every year the Swedish National Agency for Education publish statistics about the proportion of 20 year olds with completed upper secondary school education and those that achieved basic eligibility to go on to university and higher education (Skolverket 2010b).<sup>10</sup>

The national EU2020-target will be followed up by Eurostat. The definition is: “percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in education or training.” The ambition of the Swedish government is to monitor the national target not only for the population as a whole but also take into account gender differences, the impact of socioeconomic and immigrant status etc. The government also plan to develop additional sub-indicators that will make it possible to analyse the prospects and shortcomings of the systems and reforms for relevant age cohorts.

d. Which institutions are responsible for supervising the gathering and monitoring this data?

Eurostat is responsible for the data concerning the national target. The Swedish National Agency for Education is responsible for official

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<sup>10</sup> Skolverket Facts and figures 2010

national statistics for the Swedish school system including school failure.

The Swedish National Agency for Education is responsible for the official statistics and has developed a model for publication of the Official Statistics on preschool activities, school-age child care, schools and adult education. The aim is that the statistics shall

- be up-to-date
- be clearly structured
- describe whole entities
- receive wider distribution

From 2004 the Official Statistics on preschool activities, school-age child care, schools and adult education are published exclusively on the Swedish National Agency for Education's website (statistics), partly in PDF-format (each report) and partly in Excel-format (the tables, not in printed reports).<sup>11</sup> In April 2007 a revision of the statistic site was carried out in order to increase the accessibility to the Official Statistics.

The data is presented per activity at national, county and municipal level and where data is available at school level (database SIRIS). SIRIS also contains the analysis tool SALSA. This is a tool that can be used to judge compulsory schools' complete grade results after certain consideration has been given to the student composition of the schools.

## **Chapter 5: Challenges in overcoming school failure**

16. Are the major causes of educational failure in your country seen to result from issues that can be remedied from within the education system or do they need to be addressed from other parts of the political system or society?

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[http://www.skolverket.se/2.3894/publicerat/2.5006?\\_xurl\\_=http%3A%2F%2Fwww4.skolverket.se%3A8080%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D2446](http://www.skolverket.se/2.3894/publicerat/2.5006?_xurl_=http%3A%2F%2Fwww4.skolverket.se%3A8080%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D2446)

### ***Recent trends***

Along with other Nordic countries, Swedish compulsory schools are usually described as having a high degree of equity with only small between-school variations. However, Sweden is no longer top of the class. A number of studies have shown how the composition of pupil cohorts within schools has become more homogeneous; that is to say, that students from similar backgrounds have shown an increasing tendency to congregate in the same schools. There has also been an increase in differences in outcomes between schools and between various groups of students, particularly based upon social background. (Skolverket 2006).

In the recent published PISA-study (2009) those findings were confirmed. Nearly one fifth of Swedish students do not achieve baseline level in reading literacy. According to the OECD this is the skill level regarded as necessary for further learning, and meeting the competence requirements of adult life. This proportion has increased from approximately 13% to just under 18% since 2000. Among boys nearly one quarter do not attain this level. The performance of both boys and girls has decreased, but for boys the decrease is greater, and for the weak performing boys it is even greater.

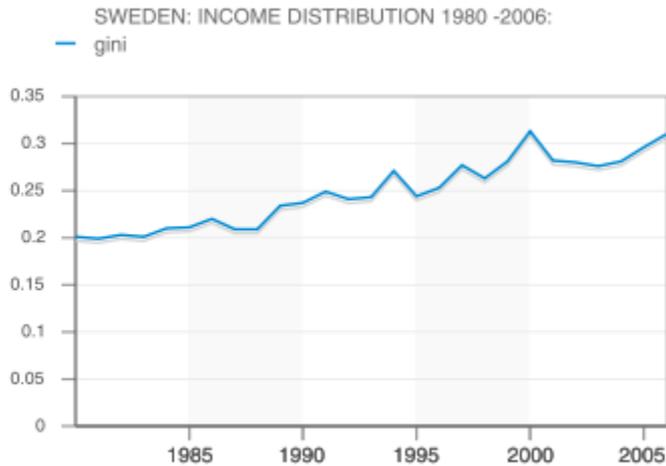
The results in PISA 2009 also show that Sweden has lost its leading position as regards equity, and currently performs no better than an average country. The differences between high and low performing students have increased, and the differences between high and low performing schools have also increased. In addition, a student's socio-economic background has become more important in determining performance, and is now more important in Sweden compared to other OECD countries.

### ***Changes in society***

Although there is evidence that suggests equity in the Swedish school system has deteriorated during the last decade, it does not necessarily imply that the Swedish school system is solely responsible for this development. There are several changes in society that have affected the context the school system operates within, e.g. increasing income inequality and segregation, and a widening gender gap.

#### **Income inequality**

In absolute terms, poverty has declined due to increased real incomes, but in relative terms, poverty has increased due to increased income inequality. The distribution of income has increased in Sweden since 1980 although Sweden still has an internationally low income inequality.



Source: Statistics Sweden

Poverty is obviously more common in some populations than in others. Children, adolescents, young adults, students, single mothers and immigrants are most at risk of poverty. Among the immigrants are newly arrived immigrants and non-European immigrants in particular high risk of poverty. The more earned income in a household and the fewer who will share them, the lower the risk of poverty (Socialstyrelsen 2010).. Measured in relative poverty, the proportion of poor children increased moderately between the periods 1993-1998 and 2003-2007 from 10.2% to 12.8%. But more worrying is the increase in relative poverty among lone-mother households, where the relative poverty rose from 13.4% to 22.4%.

#### Freedom of school choice

Despite the introduction of freedom of choice for students and parents, most students choose to go to the school that is geographically closest to their home. Therefore, an increase in school segregation, to some extent, also reflects an increase in residential segregation. More than 40 percent of children with foreign background in Sweden is concentrated in 310 of its nearly 8,000 residential areas (SCB 2007). In those areas, at least half of all children have foreign background. At the same time 55 percent of all children with a Swedish background live in areas where almost all have this background. Studies show that ethnic residential segregation in Sweden has increased in recent decades. Housing segregation is important for school achievement, children who live in areas with large numbers of children of foreign background have poorer school results than others, even controlling for background factors (ibid.).

### Gender gap

As mentioned the gender gap has widening, and from an already high level. There are several plausible explanations for those but one of the most important emerge in a broader context. It seems that it exists a masculinity norm where it is considered unmanly to read, study, obey instructions, etc. (Björnsson 2006). It also appears that this masculinity norm has been much less discussed than the femininity norm. The girls' gender identity seems to have changed and adapted, they have access to a large repertoire that includes a future of both family and work. Encouraged by the society, the girls have broken some new ground and broaden their gender identity, something which has not happened the boys.

Some other hypotheses about changes in the society have been falsified (Björklund et al 2010), e.g. that the negative trend is due to immigration or a general decline in resources. Even though Sweden has a relatively large amount of immigrants, this cannot explain the deteriorating results since the same findings show up even if we exclude students with immigrant background from the statistics. Nevertheless, immigrant students under perform and this is an issue in itself. Furthermore, there has not been a general decline in resources that can explain the negative development of the results.

### *In the class room-explanations*

The teaching staff competence is a key to student achievement (Björklund et al 2010, Barber and Mourshed 2007 etc). However, this can hardly be an explanation for the declining results since the stock of teachers does not change in the short term. Nevertheless, teacher competency may still be a problem. Evidence from several countries, including Sweden, shows that teachers over time have become increasingly likely to be drawn from the lower parts of the ability distribution, as measured by aptitude or standardized subject tests (Fredriksson and Öckert 2007). The proportion of unqualified teachers has also increased and may reasonably have affected the results negatively (Björklund et al 2010), however, research in this area is inadequate.

Streaming, as a means of dealing with individual differences between students, has evolved as an organisational principle within the unified compulsory school (Björklund et al 2010). Students are often separated into different classroom groups based on special support needs or attainment levels, resulting in increasingly homogeneous groups. Stigmatising effects often arise, leaving a negative impact on pupils' self-image and motivation. There are risks for persistence effects when placements in special groups become more permanent. In those groups where a lot of pupils have learning difficulties, teacher's expectations tend to be lower and positive peer group effects are weakened, which is the same mechanism that arises at school level in a segregated school system.

Patterns of teaching practice in Swedish compulsory schools have moved in the direction of individualisation, which can be described in general terms as a shift of responsibility away from teachers to students and in the longer term as a move from the school to the home (Skolverket 2010 and Björklund et al 2010). One report even describes this as the main explanation to the deteriorating results (Björklund et al 2010). There has been an increase in students' responsibility for their own learning with the result that schoolwork is more individualised and teachers adopt more withdrawn roles. This, in turn, leads to an increase in the importance of home support for students' educational attainments, where parents' levels of education and their cultural capital assume even greater significance.

17. What are your government and other stakeholders' perceptions of the most important challenges in overcoming school failure in the next five years?

The Swedish school system is characterised by very high ambitions and aims to include the absolute majority of children and youth in the regular school system. The Government's position is that Swedish schools as well as national initiatives and ventures must emphasise the improving of performances among students as well as securing peaceful and challenging learning environments. Students who have difficulties in achieving the goals must be identified as early as possible. Consequently, the Government has initiated several efforts in order to give all students the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their future studies and working life.

***The governments perceptions of the most important challenges***

- Strengthen the competence of the teachers and school heads
- Improve student performance in compulsory school
- Improve students through put in upper secondary education
- Give adults the opportunity to participate in formal education in a lifelong perspective
- Develop an effective system for guidance and validation
- Improve the quality in education for newly arrived students.

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