

EQUITY IN EDUCATION THEMATIC REVIEW

SWEDEN

COUNTRY NOTE

**Ides Nicaise
Gosta Esping-Andersen
Beatriz Pont
Pat Tunstall**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives and organisation of the thematic review

This country note was prepared as part of the OECD thematic review of equity in education across member countries. The review aims to assist countries in developing and implementing effective policies for equity in education. It examines the contribution of different phases of education to lifetime equity and inequity and looks, in particular, at socio-economic, ethnic, regional and gender issues. It is primarily concerned with equality of opportunity while recognising that relative equality of outcomes is often used as an indicator of equality of opportunity.

Ten countries are participating in the activity - Belgium (Flemish region), Finland, France, Hungary, Norway, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Each participating country prepares an *analytical report* on equity in education. Additionally, five of the countries (Finland, Hungary, Norway, Spain and Sweden) have opted for the full-scale thematic review strand, which includes a country visit by an OECD review team and the preparation of a Country Note. All strands of work feed into the preparation of a *final comparative report*.

The thematic review methodology includes national analysis and cross country comparison. Countries prepare a descriptive Country Analytical Report on the status of equity in education in the country. These reports describe each country's context and current equity situation, provide a profile of equity in education, examine causes and explanations, and explore the effectiveness of existing policies and potential policy solutions to problems. Each report is supported by data, where they exist, on a specified range of indicators on participation, attainment and labour market outcomes by ethnicity, region, socio-economic status and gender, alongside PISA and IALS data.

This is followed by an OECD review team visit to the country that enables the reviewers to analyse equity in education on the basis of the Country Analytical Report, discussions with policy makers at national and regional level, schools, teacher training institutions, researchers, representatives of teachers, migrants, parents, students and practitioners and other stakeholders in the educational system. The object of these visits is to assess policy through the exploration of the perspectives of different stakeholders and through the observation of practice in specific institutional contexts. This involves the participation of a team of experts able to conduct an in-depth examination of policy and practice, and to prepare a country note containing policy recommendations.

After each country visit, the team rapporteur, with the help of the OECD review team, prepares a Country Note analysing the main issues concerning equity in education and policy responses in the country under review. The Country Note addresses how to improve equality of opportunities in education, especially for disadvantaged groups. It follows the key common themes laid out for the Equity in Education Review which include a) transition, access and selection, b) fairness in funding, c) an effective political and legal framework and d) the existence of tools to address equity issues systemically. A final Comparative Report will be published in 2006, addressing the different issues and policy responses in a comparative perspective, including insights gathered from participating countries.

1.2 Participation of Sweden in the review

The OECD review team visit to Sweden was designed so that the team can develop an overall assessment of how well Sweden's educational system delivers equity in education, and its capacity to identify and resolve equity problems as they arise. This entails a wide-ranging overview of Sweden's educational system. The visit and the country note are informed by the generic set of key equity themes developed to address equity issues in this thematic review set out above. In addition, the note will examine issues important in their own right, and which also represent significant tests of the robustness of the educational system in the face of challenges to equity. They are:

- Issues of equity in compulsory education. Concerns about growing inequalities throughout the country and a fear that they might grow with the decentralisation process that has taken place from the 90s. PISA revealed an increasing variance in results, with some worrying differences between and across schools. Also, the so called independent schools (private but receiving public funds) are increasing their market share (up to 6% of the total).
- The integration of immigrants into the Swedish education system. The rapid increase in the immigrant population and their integration in Swedish society also challenge schools and lifelong learning. There are problems of segregation in Malmo, Stockholm or Gotenburg, many don't speak Swedish and have a difficult time to adapt to their new environment.
- Issues of equity as they affect high upper secondary drop out rates. The increase in drop out rates from secondary education: 98% start but only 75% finish upper secondary at the expected age. Some recover through the adult education system. There is also a very late average age of entry into the labour market (23-24 year olds).
- In a framework of decentralisation, the national government has few policy levers: They can establish national goals, but municipalities receive a lump sum and have freedom to decide where to spend. National government can issue laws and regulations and act through earmarked funding for specific projects, through inspections and dissemination of information.

The review visit to Sweden took place between 1-10 February 2005. The list of members of the steering committee, the author of the Background Report and the members of the OECD review team are presented in Annexes 1 and 2. The programme of the visit and the participants at the various meetings are included in Annex 3. The review team would like to express their deepest appreciation to the national coordinator, Hans Ake Ostrom, to the author of the Country Analytical Report, Per Bavner and to the wide range of officials and individuals involved in the visit. Their participation and commitment in the various aspects of the visit and in the provision of information on specifics, contributed to the overall accomplishment of its analysis of the status of equity in education in Sweden. Discussions were open and lively.

1.3 Structure of the paper

The purpose of the review in Sweden is to identify how well Sweden's educational system delivers equity in education, and its capacity to identify and resolve equity problems as they arise.

The Country Note begins with a short presentation of the general economic, political and socio demographic context that impact on policies for equity in education. It then briefly reviews the education context, including recent education reforms. The following chapters are devoted to each of the OECD themes underlying the review in terms of how the political and legal framework is conducive to equity in education, whether there is fairness in financial arrangements for education, how transition, access and

selection mechanisms are conducive to equity, and what are the specific tools to address equity issues systematically. A specific chapter is devoted to the issue of ethnic minorities in Swedish education, given the recent high immigration inflows into Sweden. The final chapter contains the conclusions in terms of strengths and challenges for the system and points to some key policy issues for further consideration.

This main author for this country note was the rapporteur for this review, Ides Nicaise. The other experts on the team, Gosta Esping-Andersen, Beatriz Pont and Pat Tunstall also contributed to the writing and the team as a whole take responsibility for the final product.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION – THE GENERAL CONTEXT

Swedish approaches to equity in education can be better understood within the specific social, political and economic context within which they have evolved. This chapter addresses some of the contextual issues which are relevant to education, including an overview of economic and socio demographic developments. It also provides an overview of the structure of the education system and of recent policy reforms.

2.1 Sweden: a strong egalitarian tradition

Sweden is a Nordic country which shares borders with Norway, Finland and the Baltic Sea. With a population of almost 9 million people, around one third lives in the 3 major cities of Stockholm, Goteborg and Malmo. Half of its area is woodland.

Compared with the OECD average, Sweden is a wealthy, healthy and well educated society. Its GDP per capita is 28,100 US\$, compared to 26,000 US\$ GDP per capita total OECD (using current ppps). Overall educational attainment is quite high, with at least 80% of the population having attained upper secondary education and an average life expectancy at birth of 82.8 for women and 77.7 for men. Furthermore, it has one of the highest OECD employment to population ratios, with 74% of the population at work, third only to Switzerland and Denmark and also one of the highest OECD employment rates for mothers, only after Portugal. Around 78% of all mothers of children under 7 were working in 2003.

Also, Sweden is an ageing society. In 2000, it had the highest old-age dependency ratio in any OECD country, with 27% population over 65,¹ although recent immigration might be changing these patterns. Around 5.3% of the population is foreign, and while apparently, there has not been a great inflow of immigrants in recent years (OECD, 2005b), according to the Swedish Analytical Report, this data might not be reflecting the real situation: more than 12% of the Swedish population is foreign born, representing 203 countries around the world and more than 60% of those who have migrated have Swedish citizenship. Moreover the figures do not include the large asylum seeker population.

Sweden has a strong social-democratic tradition which stresses the redistributive role of the state, social inclusion and equality, underpinned by high levels of taxation and public spending. It is the OECD country with the highest total government revenues (58.1 % of GDP) and total government expenditures (58.3%):

¹ Relative to the population aged 15-64,

51.4% of GDP is based on tax receipts as compared to and OECD average of 39.6% (OECD, 2004c). It also is second in social expenditure as a proportion of GDP of all OECD countries. It has one of the lowest poverty rates in all OECD countries, with less than 5.3% of the population below the poverty levels (as opposed to an OECD average of 10.2%) and also has one of the lowest levels of income inequality in OECD countries².

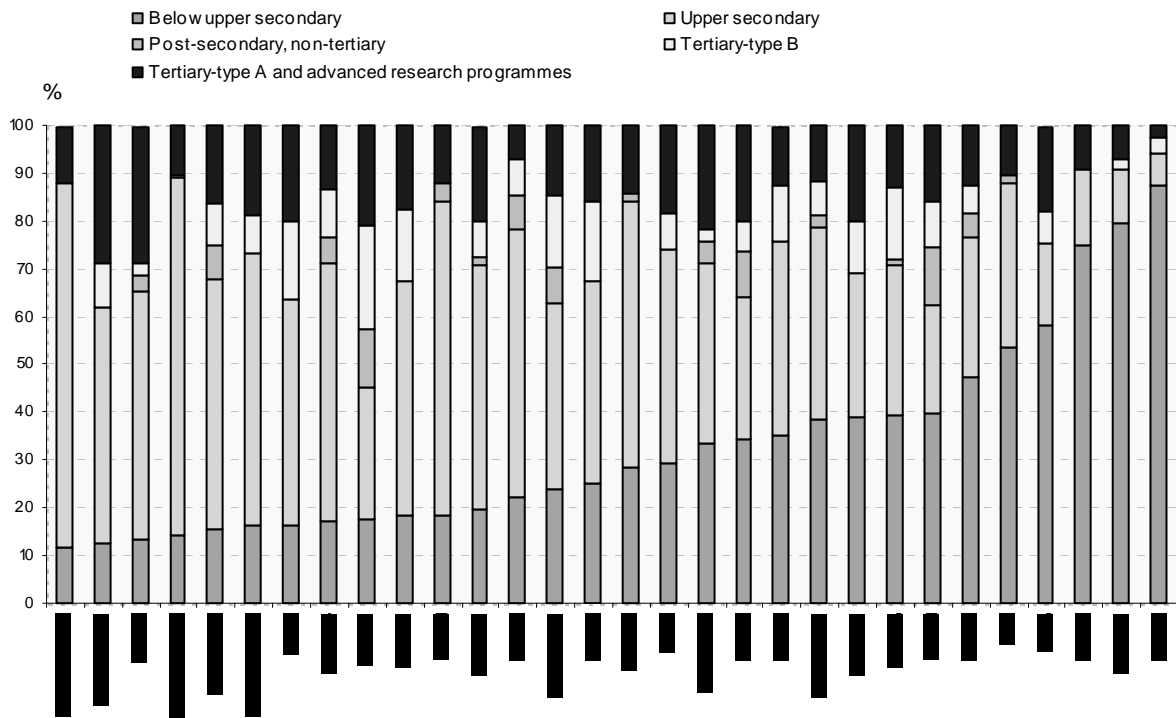
Swedish spending on education is amongst the highest in the world. In 2003, Swedish total public expenditure on all types of education was 6.5% of GDP compared with an OECD average of 5.6%: Public funding of education stood at 6.3%, compared to an OECD total of 5%, while private spending in education ranks among the lowest in OECD countries (OECD, 2004a, Table B2.1a). This makes Sweden among the most generous countries in proportionate terms, although it has to be said, that in recent years, funds for educational institutions have decreased slightly (OECD, 2004a, Table B3.1).

2.2 Educational achievement, attainment and literacy levels

As can be seen from figure 1, the level of educational attainment of the population is relatively high, with less than 20% of adults having below upper secondary education, and almost 18% having tertiary education. Enrolment rates in the different education levels are quite high from pre-school all the way through post-compulsory education. 86% of those 15 through 19 are enrolled in education full time or part time. Also, it must be highlighted that Sweden has one of the highest proportions of part-timers among OECD countries, with 12% studying part time in primary and secondary education. Many young adults in Sweden combine education with significant participation in work during studies. Thus, while secondary education may not be fully completed at the expected ages, some may be doing so at later ages.

² The Gini coefficient is 24.3%. The gini coefficient is a summary measure of income distribution across households. A value of 0 shows “perfect equality” and a value of 100 is the case of “perfect inequality”.

Level education attained by the adult population (2002)
Distribution of 25- to 64-year-old population

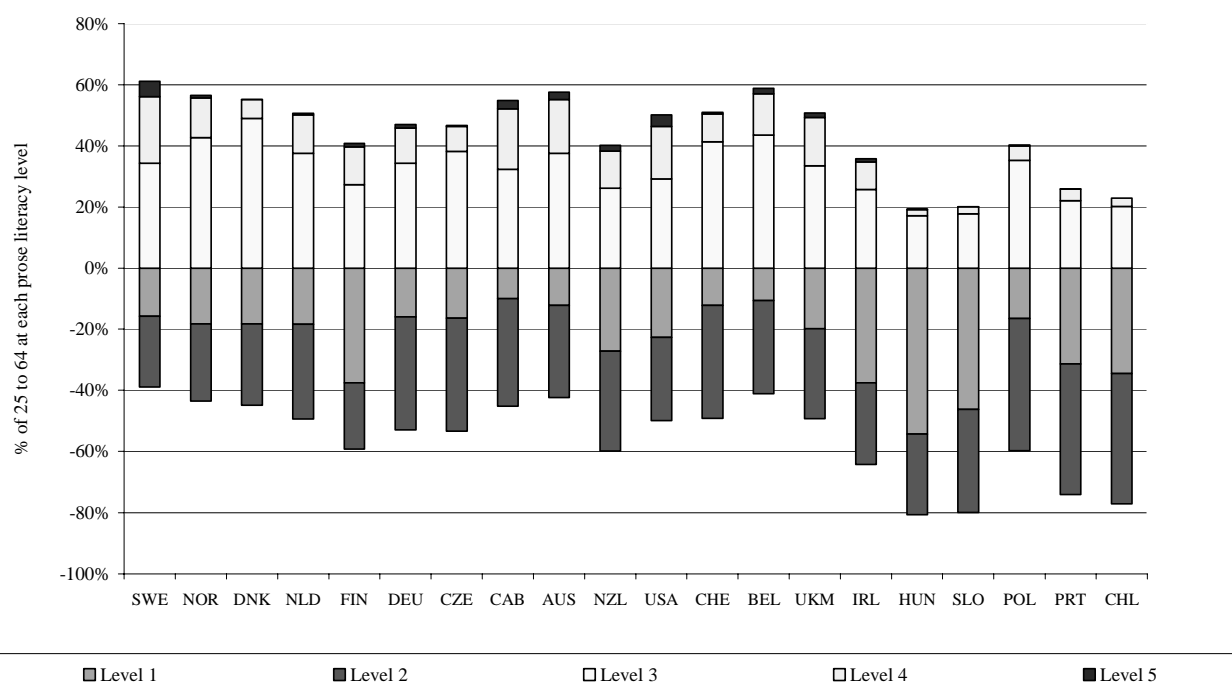


Source: OECD (2004), Education at a Glance, Paris.

The Swedish population is not only highly educated, but also highly literate. According to the International Adult Literacy Survey, Sweden had the highest average score out of 22 countries, and also one of the lowest spreads, with high literacy levels even for those adults who had not reached upper secondary education.

Figure 2: Adult literacy levels, 1994-1998

Prose literacy levels for adults 25 to 64 year olds



In terms of the literacy scores of 15 year olds based on the Project for International Student Assessment (PISA), Sweden has performed above the OECD average in reading, with a small standard deviation. However, in scientific and mathematic literacy, while high, performance has not reached the same levels as reading. Still, it is important to say that the spread of these results has been smaller than in the OECD on average, except for scientific literacy. PISA results for Sweden also show that there are small differences in performance between schools, implying that performance is largely unrelated to the schools children attend, although comparison of results from 2000 and 2003 do show increasing –while still relatively small- differences between and across schools.

Table 1: Mean Performance and Standard Deviation on Reading, scientific and mathematic literacy, 2003

Country	Reading	Standard Deviation	Scientific literacy	Standard Deviation	Mathematics	Standard Deviation
Norway	500	104	484	104	495	92
Denmark	492	98	475	102	514	91
Finland	543	89	548	91	544	84
Sweden	514	92	506	107	509	95
OECD	494	100	500	105	500	100

Source: OECD (2004), Learning for tomorrow's world: First results from PISA 2003, Paris.

2.3 The educational system and recent policy reforms

The education system has been an integral component of the Swedish concept of the welfare state. Compulsory schooling was already introduced in 1842. In the 1960s, Sweden had nine years of free compulsory education for those aged 7 and over. It provided a comprehensive education, with all children following a similar curriculum determined by the national government. Upper secondary education was voluntary and offered different programmes, from vocational training to programmes preparing for university studies. Parallel to this, there has also been a strong tradition of public support to adult liberal education, viewed as an integral part of the social-democratic philosophy, encouraging the accumulation of social and human capital.

The schooling system has focused on providing equality of opportunities and equivalence of outcomes. The result of this is that almost all Swedes now stay on in full-time education beyond the minimum school leaving age. The adult education system reinforces this equality of opportunities to adults by also offering the possibility of a second chance to adults who missed it in the first place and giving another route to jobs with higher pay or better conditions (OECD, 2001).

The Swedish education system has undergone a number of important reforms in the past 15 years which have a strong bearing on equity. A process of decentralisation has left the national government with few policy levers at a national scale: They establish national goals, and municipalities receive a lump sum and have freedom to decide where to spend. Other policy levers have been reinforced such as evaluation and inspection and the provision of information to be able to influence.

Decentralisation

During the 1990s, the education system was decentralised from the central government to local authorities and schools so as to encourage greater innovation and flexibility in the system and to stimulate local democracy; to reduce spending across the public sector; and to promote increased efficiency by introducing more market forces in education (e.g. more competition among public schools and the encouragement of independent schools).

The national government has retained overall responsibility in defining the national objectives and guidelines of education and curriculum, and the municipalities have freedom to determine how they want to accomplish this. While the national government and parliament continue to play a substantial role in school education, the system is now goal oriented. Within the framework of the guidelines adopted by Parliament and the Government in the Education Act, ordinances, curricula, syllabuses and timetables, the local authorities decide how school education is to be organised and what resources to allocate for this purpose out of their budgets.

Within this decentralisation trend, support for private institutions has been promoted. Thus, while all students attend publicly funded schools, around 11% of schools, catering for 6% of enrolled students, are so called independent schools or private institutions. Independent compulsory and upper secondary schools are open to everyone, follow the same curricula and receive grants from the municipalities according to the same criteria as the municipality's own schools. The term 'private', often used as a synonym for 'independent' thus refers to the management rather than the funding of schools. Section 4 of this report will examine the implications of these reforms in terms of equity.

Evaluation and support

The central government also evaluates performance. This is conducted by an organisation that has statutory independence, the National Agency for Education, which is the administrative authority for the Swedish school system. The Agency develops syllabi and criteria for grading, and also has the main task of reviewing the quality and results of education, both at local authority and school level, and to exercise supervision over school education services and childcare services (preschools, family daycare homes, open preschools and leisure-time centres). The Agency is now in the midst of an inspection of all Swedish schools through its Educational Inspectorate.

In addition, the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement was established in 2003 to support and stimulate local authorities and schools to achieve the national objectives and to improve quality in priority areas. Its responsibilities include support to local development of work quality and improvement of learning environments to ensure high quality and equal opportunities for pupils and students. The agency targets childcare services (preschools, family daycare homes, open preschools and leisure-time centres), school and adult education to try to support those schools which have been detected to have difficulties or problems (www.skolutveckling.se/in_english/).

Both institutions (NAE and NASI) will be discussed in extensor in section 5.4 of this report.

Information

The National Agency for Education publishes all results of evaluations, including inspections reports and tests results of individual schools and municipalities through SIRIS, the National Agency for Education's online information system, which has been in operation since September 2001. (http://siris.skolverket.se/pls/portal30/PORTAL30.siris_frame.siris).

Furthermore, to promote more transparency, schools and municipalities have been obliged to submit annual quality reports since 1997 and initiatives are now being taken to introduce from Autumn 2005 this rule into pre-school and school-age child care. There are plans to strengthen rules governing the school's obligation to inform parents and pupils about pupils' study progress on a regular basis throughout compulsory schooling, and an obligation will be introduced for schools to issue written assessments for pupils who do not achieve the goals for compulsory levels.

2.4 Structure of the school system

The Swedish education system is outlined in figure 3.

Figure 3: Structure of the Swedish Education System

The Swedish Education System

		Age	Years of study
Universities and university colleges (doctoral studies)		21	
		18	
Universities and university colleges (undergraduate and graduate studies)	Advanced vocational-training	17	
		13	
Upper secondary school	Adult education	18	12
Compulsory school		16	10
		15	9
Pre-school class	School-age child care	7	1
Pre-school		6	
Pre-school		1-5	

Pre-primary education and pre-school (1-6)

Municipalities are required to provide pre-school activity for all children aged 1 to 5 and pre-school classes to all 6 year olds. Municipal pre-school activity is jointly financed by the municipal budget and parental fees, usually income-related.

One year pre-school classes are non-compulsory classes usually organised within a school to which all six-year-olds are entitled to. While attendance is voluntary, 95 per cent of all six-year-olds attend a pre-school class, 3% of all six-year-olds attend compulsory school and 2 % preschools, normally lasting three hours a day. The purpose of these classes is to stimulate children's development and learning and lay a foundation for their future school education.

Compulsory education (7 to 16)

Sweden has a nine-year compulsory comprehensive school for students aged 7-16. On the basis of the curriculum, each municipality is required to set out the general objectives for its school in a school plan. In addition, every school has to devise a work plan, based on the curriculum and local priorities. Within this framework, teachers and institutions have freedom to determine teaching methods and select teaching materials. The curricula prescribe compulsory subjects, subject syllabuses and curricular aims and Swedish, English and mathematics occupy a prominent position. Students also study practical arts subjects, health and physical education, social sciences, natural sciences, technology, home economics and another foreign language. There is a national timetable with the number of hours per subject, but municipalities /

schools decide themselves on the distribution of hours and in what year a subject is to be introduced, as long as pupils meet the goals set in the curriculum for year five and nine. The comprehensive school curriculum is generally acknowledged as the cornerstone of equal educational opportunities.

In the first six years, students are mostly taught by the same teacher for all subjects except physical education and health, art, music and crafts. Thereafter there are separate teachers for each subject area, although teachers often work in teams.

There are also special schools for *Sami* and for those with learning disabilities. *Sami schools* offer the children of the Sami (a national ethnic minority group living in parts of northern Sweden) an education with a Sami focus. *State special schools* provide individually adapted education for pupils who are deaf or have impaired hearing that corresponds as far as possible to a normal comprehensive school education. *Schools for children with learning disabilities* provide individually adapted education for pupils with learning disabilities that correspond as far as possible to normal comprehensive and upper secondary school education.

Upper secondary education (16-19)

Upper secondary school (gymnasium) is non-compulsory and free of charge and is open to students who have completed comprehensive school. Students can choose between 17 three-year *national programmes*, 14 of which are vocationally oriented. All these programmes provide a broad basic education and basic eligibility for higher studies. Core subjects take up about one-third of the students' study time in both theoretical and vocational programmes. In order to follow one of the 17 national programmes students are required to have at least pass grades in Swedish (as a mother tongue or as a second language), English and mathematics.

Apart from the national programmes there are specially designed and individual programmes. Individual programmes are for students who, due to insufficient qualifications or other reasons, cannot start a national or specially designed programme immediately.

Student work is assessed on a continuous basis, with marks awarded for the completion of each course. National tests have been developed in certain subjects. No final examination is taken, but a leaving certificate is awarded. A very important feature of gymnasium is that all tracks (academic as well as vocational) give access to tertiary education.³

Adult Education (20-)

After the age of 20, adults may attend education programmes corresponding to compulsory school and non-compulsory education, (municipal adult education or Komvux) and programmes for adults with learning disabilities (Särvux). Komvux also offers continuing education programmes that give specialized skills in a particular occupational field.

There are distance learning programmes, which combine distance and school visits offered by the Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning.

³ Depending on the route (transition from option x in gymnasium into option y in tertiary education) additional examinations may need to be taken for which bridging courses are available in Komvux (adult education).

Swedish for immigrants (SFI) is designed to provide newcomers and other immigrants without sufficient knowledge in Swedish with knowledge of the Swedish language and Swedish society. Municipalities have an obligation to offer SFI free of charge, to new adult immigrants.

Liberal adult education is also very present in Swedish society. This form of education aims to promote democracy, equality, gender equality as well as international and cultural understanding and development and there may be as many as 2 million people taking these types of courses annually.

2.5 Conclusion – issues for debate

Sweden enjoys a high standard of living, supported by a strong welfare state with clear objectives of democracy, equity and social cohesion. There is a strong societal support for education. Furthermore, with a highly educated population enjoying a high standard of living, there are constant efforts towards improvement in the area of education. Nevertheless, there are some issues for concern:

- With the high levels of public expenditure in education, there may be some sources of concern regarding PISA results, especially in mathematics. Furthermore, the gap between the top and bottom performers appears to be increasing.
- Sweden's very large immigrant population presents a major challenge to policy makers in terms of social inclusion generally and educational inclusion specifically.
- High enrolment rates could be masking some inefficiencies of the system, with youngsters making a very long transition through secondary education with the use of part-time studies and the use of adult education programmes to recover. While this may not be negative, it may be necessary to control the extent of it so as not to fall into unnecessary expenditures. There are also at least 10% of youngsters who never finish secondary education.
- While there is strong support for the 1990s decentralisation efforts, some actions maybe required to counteract the effects on equity and to strengthen the potential of the national government for action.

3. THE CONCEPT OF EQUITY IN THE SWEDISH POLITICAL CULTURE

A hallmark of the Swedish welfare state and certainly also its education policy is a firm and overriding preference for universal and equal entitlements of citizenship, as opposed to targeting policy to those in need. There exist very few education programmes that are targeted to special groups, or that pursue explicit 'affirmative action' on behalf of less privileged children, schools, or communities. The underlying philosophy is that universalism is the most effective approach to promote social inclusion and equality of resources, in part because it helps sustain social solidarity and political support behind redistributive policies and, in part, because it minimizes social stigmatization and segmentation. Hence, contemporary policy for equity is very much a latter day echo of the social democrats' age old concept of the '*peoples' home*'.

A primary and explicitly stated objective of education policy, like the welfare state more generally, is to ensure equality of opportunities by way of securing that all citizens have access to the resources necessary. Traditionally the key target has been to eliminate the effects of social class differences and social inheritance, and unsurprisingly, due to the immigration wave of the 1990s, immigrant status has been added as a potential source of unequal life chances. However, it is surprising to see that the Swedish debate on educational equity is so overwhelmingly focused on gender issues, to the extent that it almost completely overshadows questions of social inheritance and, perhaps worse, the inequalities related to immigrant status. This bias was striking in many interviews we had during the country visit. While statistics convincingly demonstrate that girls are outclassing boys on many levels, many people we met emphasised some remaining issues where girls still appear to be at a disadvantage (e.g. stress at school). Our general understanding is that the gender balance in education has been 'over-achieved' (to the extent that women currently take 64% of all higher education diplomas and represent 2/3 of all students in adult education). By contrast, our interlocutors made rather few comments on the fact that no more than 25% of all working-class youngsters complete a preparatory programme for higher education, as against 70% of all children of high-level white-collar workers. Similarly, any lingering gender differentials would pale in comparison to the immigrant divide in school performance and educational attainment.

As broadly understood by the Swedish public and policy makers alike, the quest for equality includes three overlapping core dimensions. The first dimension refers to the pursuit of equal life chances for all citizens. Policy does not necessarily aim at achieving identical end-results for all but rather what might be termed *equivalent outcomes* (Englund, 2005). The wording 'equivalent' (rather than 'equal') is important as it indicates an ideological shift in education policy, from a strong emphasis on identical treatment of all students to greater individual autonomy and diversity. The principle of 'equivalence' aims at reconciling equality and diversity: equal levels of education should have equal value and impact on people's opportunities (for example, in terms of access to labour market positions or further education), while it is acknowledged that young people, as well as their parents, have different preferences and talents. This is typically the case in upper secondary education, where all (general as well as vocational) options in principle give access to tertiary education. Gradually, the concept of equivalence has also been used to justify decentralisation of educational authority, more flexible curricula and the freedom to establish independent schools.

Swedish policy applies two main instruments in trying to achieve equivalent outcomes. One stresses 'demand-side' policies aimed at eliminating barriers to, and inequalities of, educational attainment, in

particular with regard to credit constraints and resource weaknesses in families. Not only is family support unusually generous but access to education is free throughout the system, from first grade to higher education. The second applies to educational system design. Swedish policy seeks to eliminate dead-ends and tracking of students through a large menu of second-chance options and bridges to higher levels. The stated aim is that *all* children will complete the equivalent of upper secondary school and that *all* be given the opportunity to pursue tertiary studies if they so desire.

Secondly, egalitarianism is inseparable from the quest for *trygghet*, i.e. the feeling of security in life, the idea being that insecurity in a risk society hampers individual self realization and also parents' ability to make the best educational choices on behalf of their children. Perhaps most importantly, the aim of maximizing *trygghet* is to eliminate performance anxiety among children, and to inculcate a culture that promotes the desire to learn. Examples of this include the abolition of (generalised) testing and grading procedures in the first five years of compulsory school, and the possibility for youngsters who fail at some stage to move on into further education via individual or tailored programmes.

Thirdly, and to avoid misconceptions, it is vital to stress that universalism in terms of entitlements and educational participation is framed in a highly *individualistic* mould. Social rights are attached to the individual and policy is systematically designed to facilitate individual accomplishment. To exemplify, family benefits are distributed in the name of the children and not the family and, as we shall see, a highlight of education policy is its accent on the preferences, abilities, and needs of the individual child. Hence, in practice the (new) Swedish style universalism is the antithesis to uniformity, standardization and collectivism.

Moving from principles to practice there is considerable scientific evidence to suggest that, indeed, the Swedish model has been successful in its pursuit of equal opportunities in education. One of the most authoritative comparative studies concludes that Sweden is one of the few countries in which the effect of parental social origin on educational attainment has weakened significantly (Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993). In an effort to identify more precisely how this has come about, Erikson and Jonsson (1996) argue that low poverty rates and the absence of income insecurity in child families is one factor. They also stress the positive effects of Sweden's comprehensive schools⁴ and the presence of second-chance possibilities throughout the system.

⁴ There is currently a broad consensus among educationalists and educational sociologists, that *comprehensive school* curricula are conducive to greater social equality in outcomes. All Scandinavian countries typically have a long and broad basic education curriculum (9 years). Comprehensive education is characterized by the following elements: a more or less uniform curriculum for all pupils, with subjects covering a broad range of skills (language, mathematics, science, arts, health and physical education, social studies, technology, home economics...), and maximum delay of selection.

4. FAIRNESS IN FUNDING

The issue of equity in funding entails several aspects that interact in a complex way with each other. On the *demand side*, the principles look very generous, as free education (including free books, meals and transportation to the nearest school⁵) is guaranteed for all in compulsory education. Free access is also guaranteed in state-run higher education and in municipal adult education (Komvux). As empirical studies of actual school-related expenditure are lacking, the implementation of the law can not be examined closely.

The regulations discussed above are meant to cover direct costs only. Indirect costs (the opportunity cost of students' time) is covered partially by a student grant at upper secondary level; at tertiary level, a generous system of universally accessible student grants and loans aims at overcoming potential credit constraints of students. For adult education, employees are entitled to educational leave. The principle of universality is justified by different factors in the Swedish context: (a) means-tested grants involve a high implicit tax rate and may also stigmatise beneficiaries; (b) universal services get broader support from the public; and (c) subsidised education for all is a necessary incentive in countries with high taxes and a strongly compressed wage distribution (Björklund et al., 2004).

On the *supply side*, as we saw in section 2.3, the 1990s have marked a turning point in the organisation and funding of education: the system of centralised funding has been completely overhauled and replaced with a decentralised system of quasi-markets. The next two sections will examine these reforms in detail, from the point of view of equity.

4.1 Decentralisation

Two successive reforms in the early 1990s transformed Swedish education into one of the most decentralised systems worldwide. In 1991, the responsibility for the provision of compulsory, upper secondary and adult education was transferred to the municipalities; and in 1993, most separate, targeted grants from the central to the local authorities (including grants for education, child care, elderly care, infrastructure etc.) were merged into general grants. Implicitly, these reforms allowed for divergence between municipalities, not only in educational expenditure per student, but even in teacher salaries.

The main objective of the reform was obviously to raise the efficiency of education services by giving municipalities more autonomy and making them accountable. For local governments, this transfer of authority has meant a considerable extension of their responsibilities: educational expenditure today accounts for roughly 45% of the municipal budgets. The local authorities that we met during the country visit appeared to dispose of a strong capacity in addressing their task.⁶ They had a good awareness of the specificities (including the threats) of the local environment, a clear strategy, a thorough understanding of the instruments at their disposal (municipal school boards, appointment of directors, funding rules,

⁵ Note that, in the context of free school choice, parents have to pay for transportation if their choice deviates from the residence-based assignment procedure.

⁶ Admittedly, we only met local authorities in cities.

evaluation procedures, ‘profiling’ of municipal schools, pedagogical innovation, creation and closure of schools etc.). On the other hand, there is very little co-ordination between municipalities in the field of education policy: the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions confines its role to lobbying for maximum autonomy of local authorities (e.g. opposition against targeted grants) and does not even organise any activities contributing to the exchange of experience or common reflection on educational strategies.

The national government has kept no more than a marginal financial power, which it uses for temporary high-priority actions. Examples include the training of teachers, the Adult Education Initiative, a special programme for highly segregated school areas and support to the implementation of the guaranteed preschool programme (issues that will be discussed later in this report).

Of course, the national government has retained command over other instruments. In order to preserve the equal right of young people to high-quality education across the country, the national Education Act still defines the key objectives, the curriculum, and the minimum number of teaching periods for each subject. Furthermore, a formula of equalising – though not earmarked - grants was designed to redistribute resources from wealthy to poorer municipalities. Finally, the National Agency for Education (NAE) has been entrusted with the monitoring and evaluation of educational expenditure (among other things). Yearly statistics on a series of performance indicators of schools are published on the website of the NAE.

Two specific studies have been published so far about the impact of the decentralisation of Swedish education on equity (Björklund e.a., 2004; Ahlin & Mörk, 2005). To begin with, both studies confirm that educational expenditure per student (measured in terms of money or teacher density) has fallen rather dramatically during the 1990s – followed by a slight increase after the turn of the millennium.⁷ According to Björklund et al. (2004), the teacher / student ratio has decreased by 18.7% during the 1990s. Whether this can be directly attributed to the decentralisation or to the impact of the economic downturn of the 1990s remains an open question. During our country visit, the teachers’ unions also expressed their concern about the suppression of many specialised staff posts (school psychologist, leisure educator, social counsellor etc.), which has involved a shift of burden towards regular teachers.

Apart from the (intended or unintended) reduction in overall expenditure, the key question that concerns us here is whether the reform has widened the gap between wealthy and poor municipalities – and indirectly, between high- and low-SES students. Ahlin & Mörk have examined the short-term impact of the reform on two indicators of education expenditure at the municipal level: expenditure per pupil and the teacher / pupil ratio, across the period 1989-1995, using a fixed-effect model with the municipal tax base as well as the government grants – along with other independent variables - to account for the two connected steps of the reform. Their findings can be summarised as follows:

- in the short run, the variance in expenditure across municipalities appeared to have decreased rather than increased, which means that the fear for increased inequality seemed unjustified;
- the local tax base (i.e. the ‘own’ resources of municipalities) had no positive impact on expenditure after the reform, which may mean that the redistributive grant system has been effective in offsetting wealth inequalities between municipalities;
- thirdly, the regression results showed that grants from the central government had a significant positive impact on education expenditure prior to the reforms (i.e. when grants were earmarked) but no significant effect after 1993 (when all grants were merged). From this, the authors

⁷ The number of teachers did not follow the rise in the number of students.

conclude that earmarked grants may be preferable as a steering instrument from the point of view of the central government.

Björklund et al. (2004) examine the longer-term effects and draw less rosy conclusions:

- by the end of the 1990s, disparities in teacher / student ratio between municipalities have widened, mainly at the bottom of the distribution;
- at the same time, the between-school variance in average student achievement appears to have risen. Although the causal effect of diverging teacher / student ratios on increased inequality in student achievement is not formally proven in the report, the authors strongly suspect that this is the case. They show that the school achievement of low-SES students is more sensitive to variation in teacher density than that of average students. Drawing on earlier research, they also suggest that raising the teacher / student ratio again may yield a high return in the long run.

A similar critical note can be found in the NAE's report on 'Preschool in transition' which expresses great concern about the lack of priority given to children from disadvantaged backgrounds or areas. *"In a decentralised organisation, there is a risk that pre-schools facing worse conditions do not receive sufficient support to carry out their tasks. The evaluation shows that lack of support in terms of resources and management appears to affect primarily pre-schools in low resource catchment areas. Although pre-schools work under different conditions, municipalities take little account of this when allocating resources. (...) The introduction of the curriculum has, amongst other things, aimed at creating pre-schools of equivalent quality. Seen in relation to the intentions of the curriculum and based on an equivalence perspective, the National Agency for Education considers that some of the variations shown by the evaluation are cause for concern."* (Skolverket, 2004/239, p.33-34).

The problem thus has two faces: one is the inequality in average expenditure between municipalities, which can no longer be fully compensated by supplementary government grants, since local authorities have discretionary power as to their own level of expenditure. The other has to do with the distribution of resources between (pre)schools *within* municipalities. Whereas the NAE can monitor the quality of services - and does advocate greater differentiation and targeting in response to unequal opportunities -, the national government has now given up most of its power in these matters and depends on the collaboration of local governments.

Combining the two reports with impressions from our country visit, we can conclude:

- that the decentralisation reform may well have contributed to economies in educational expenditure, but
- that, in the longer run, it entails a risk of widening inequalities between municipalities, schools and pupils.
- Thirdly, Ahlin and Mörk suggest that the re-introduction of earmarked government grants may help restore the balance, where the advantages of decentralised administration and centralised budgeting can be combined.

4.2 Quasi-markets: independent schools and free school choice

The decentralisation of the early 1990s was paralleled by another reform in 1992, introducing freedom in school choice as well as in the creation of schools. On the one hand, parents can now choose another public

or private school than the one dictated previously by their place of residence. Public schools prioritise candidates from their district, whereas admission in private schools is based on the ‘first come, first serve’ principle. Exceptions are found in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö, where admission in upper secondary schools is based on prior achievement since 2000. On the other hand, private schools can be created freely: applications are approved by the National Agency for Education after consultation with the municipal authorities. Municipalities have no veto-right, however, and are obliged to subsidise the private schools on equal footing with their own public schools, i.e. per pupil. Note that private schools (also called ‘independent schools’) cannot charge tuition fees.

Observers agree that, in the Swedish case, competition still operates mainly between public schools, rather than between public and independent schools. The share of the latter has grown fairly rapidly since 1992, but it has remained relatively modest (5.7% in 2002). It is larger in densely populated areas, particularly in Stockholm where it exceeds 20% (Söderström & Uusitalo, 2005). Needless to say, municipalities tend to react rather reluctantly to the obligation to fund their own competitors. One local government reported during the interviews that parents had created another school as soon as the municipality had closed one, thereby offsetting public planning. By contrast, 90% of the parents support the principle of free choice (Skolverket, 2003/230). In 1993, 19% of the parents had chosen a different school than the one they would be assigned to on the basis of their residence (Skolverket/243, 2004).

Several effects can be expected from the introduction of school competition: (a) better quality and higher average achievement; (b) greater efficiency, resulting in lower costs per pupil, and (c) increased segregation and inequality in outcomes. Given the strong controversies surrounding these issues, it is not surprising to find a plethora of studies on the impact of the Swedish reforms (Bergström & Sandström, 2001; Sandström & Bergström, 2002; Wibe, 2002; Franssen & Wennemo, 2003; Ahlin, 2003; Björklund et al., 2004; Söderström & Uusitalo, 2005). We briefly discuss the findings relating to costs and performance, and elaborate on segregation effects, which are most relevant for the purpose of this report.

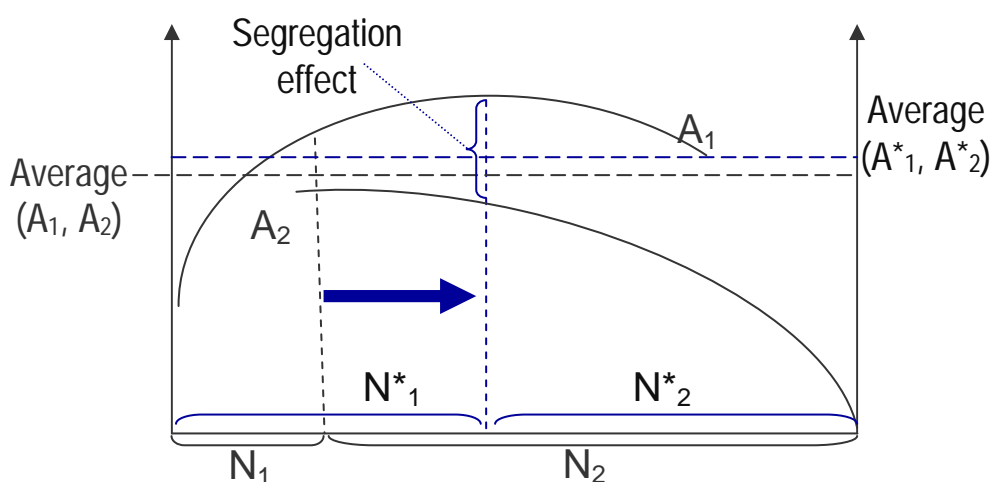
The international literature provides mixed evidence as to whether school competition enhances or reduces average costs. Some authors argue that competition increases costs, due to diseconomies of scale and the costs of publicity in markets with many providers. In Sweden, Franssen & Wennemo (2003) used cross-section data on the municipality level for 2001 to regress expenditure per pupil on the share of the school population going to independent schools (the latter variable is often used as a proxy for the degree of competition). They found a positive relation between private market share and average cost. However, their findings are not corroborated by Björklund et al. (2004), who used a dynamic (difference-in-differences) design. Björklund et al. note that they find no evidence either which would point to a cost reduction.

As regards average achievement, three Swedish studies (Sandström & Bergström, 2001; Ahlin, 2003; Björklund et al., 2004) accord with the theoretical predictions, demonstrating that average test achievement has risen since the reform. According to Björklund et al., the achievement gain is stronger in private schools, but it is unclear whether this is attributable to the quality of the teaching or to the increased sorting by ability in these schools. Further, Björklund et al. use an interaction term with social background and find that, unfortunately, immigrants and low-SES pupils have not gained from the overall quality improvement – not even in absolute terms.

This brings us to the key issue in the context of this chapter, namely, the impact of school choice on segregation. Let us first analyse the theoretical argument by means of figure 4. In a context of ‘quasi-markets’, the price mechanism as ‘invisible hand’ is typically ruled out through government intervention, while at the same time competition is encouraged by free choice on the part of ‘customers’ (in casu: parents). Providers (i.e. schools) tend to maximise their ‘reputation’ rather than profit. According to Davies & Adnett (1998), the objective function of a school (reflecting its reputation) can be represented by an

inverse U-shaped curve in terms of the number of pupils (curves A_1 and A_2 in figure 4). Up to some point, more pupils involve higher revenues and thus allow the school to improve its pedagogical quality. Beyond the optimum, the quality and reputation of the school can decrease again, due to capacity constraints, organisational problems etc. Now assume that two schools are competing with each other within the same catchment area. In a context of compulsory education, the total number of pupils is exogenously determined. Therefore, in figure 4, we assume a ‘closed’ market where any enrolment gain for school 1 means a loss for school 2, and vice versa. The graph for school 2 is displayed mirror wise as a complement to school 1, so the number of pupils enrolled in school 2 should be read from right to left. By assumption, the ‘reputation curve’ of school 2 lies on a lower level - for example, because school 2 is situated in a deprived neighbourhood.

Figure 4: The effect of quasi-markets on segregation



Suppose that the initial distribution of students across the two schools, as determined by residential criteria, results in N_1 students in school 1 and N_2 in school 2. Given the better reputation of school 1, the introduction of free school choice will lead to a shift of pupils from school 2 to school 1, accompanied by a growing gap in average achievement between the two schools (see the ‘segregation effect’ in figure 4. The ‘equilibrium distribution (N^*_1, N^*_2) is determined by the fact that school 1 will restrict the number of admissions so as to maximise its reputation. School 2 is the obvious ‘loser’, with lesser students and lower average achievement. As regards the overall achievement, the shift in enrolment may (but does not necessarily) mean that the average achievement across both schools increases after the reform.

The impact of liberalisation on average achievement actually depends on several factors: the incentive effect of competition, the configuration of local education markets, the degree of pre-reform segregation (for example, due to residential segregation), etc. As regards segregation, however, it can be expected that stronger schools win from the reform, whereas disadvantaged schools lose.

There is an increasing amount of literature (including studies based on PISA – see e.g. Vandenberghe, 1996; Hirtt, 2002; Hoxby, 2003) corroborating the above hypothesis. Sweden makes no exception as regards segregation by parental educational background: Björklund et al. (2004) find a strong over-representation of children of highly-educated parents in private schools. The situation is a bit particular, however, when we look at migration status: children of immigrants also appear to be over-represented in independent schools – probably segregated language schools rather than high-SES private schools. Söderström and Uusitalo (2005) focus on the situation in Stockholm, where school competition is partly based on prior achievement since 2000. They find strong evidence of rising segregation by SES and

immigrant status, partly determined by increased residential segregation but clearly fuelled by the 2000 reform.

New problems have arisen in some municipalities where local governments attempted to restore the balance by giving a preferential treatment to schools with a concentration of at-risk groups. Private elite schools claimed equal funding in court and were put in the right, probably due to a lack of transparent criteria for preferential treatment of disadvantaged schools.

Adult education in Sweden has a longer record of decentralisation and liberalisation. An important difference with compulsory education is that this market is not governed by regulations concerning compulsory participation or quotas, which means that no 'zero-sum game' is at work. In other words, competition is less extreme and has less negative externalities. At Järfälla, the OECD-team met the municipal Board of Education as well as private and public providers and representatives of the students' association. The municipality sees the role of its services as a combination of brokerage between the customers and (public as well as private) providers, 'admission board' and student guidance. About 1,000 students participate in basic adult education, Swedish for immigrants (SFI), upper secondary level courses and advanced vocational training. Tendering procedures are used to outsource courses as well as the production of course materials. According to the local authorities, quasi-markets in this field operate quite satisfactorily as they have led to lower costs and have been conducive to various forms of innovation: individualised programmes with computer-assisted learning, e-learning, more intensive courses, new course materials for the 'core subject package', alternative pedagogical methods such as co-operative learning, 'constructivist dialogue', and the use of portfolios. We felt that the Board of Education has been able to strike a balance between efficiency and equity: for example, output funding is not being applied in order to avoid creaming (many students are low-literate or have immigrated recently), yet performance is being monitored in terms of output indicators.

4.3 Conclusion - issues for debate

During the 1990s, the highly egalitarian Swedish education system has undergone some major reforms in economic management, driven by an objective of cost containment and efficiency. The decentralisation reform in particular seems to have had some impact on cost reduction, whereas the school choice reform has brought about a gain in average student achievement. At the same time, however, both reforms appear to have contributed to more segregation and greater inequalities in initial education.

Björklund et al. (2004) do have a point when they argue that pupils from low-SES and immigrant backgrounds have not necessarily lost from the liberalisation of the Swedish school system: they observe a status-quo in achievement among disadvantaged groups, while other groups appear to have gained from the quality competition between schools. However, whether this is a satisfactory outcome in the rush towards the knowledge-based society remains a question for debate.

Both sets of issues (decentralisation and liberalisation) actually point to the same policy suggestions in regard to the funding of education: if Sweden wants to combine the efficiency gains from a quasi-market system with its tradition of egalitarianism, this may require a stronger authority of the central government over educational priority funding for at-risk groups, either in the form of targeted central budgets, or in terms of regulatory power over municipal education outlays.

As regards school choice, one should be aware that, in reality, choice does not only rest with parents, as schools also tend to select their applicants. The experience of Stockholm points to a serious risk of dualisation, which clashes with the declared objective of equal outcomes across social groups. A reflection about the legal restriction of admission rules is therefore highly desirable.

5. TOOLS TO ADDRESS EQUITY ISSUES SYSTEMATICALLY

We now turn to the proper analysis of policy instruments that are – or can be – used to monitor and foster equity in education. A distinction will be made between, on the one hand, the policy instruments used to promote equity (sections 5.1 to 5.3) and on the other hand, the institutions and regulations that have been designed for the monitoring of equity in education (section 5.4).

The first three sections elaborate on specific strategies to foster equal opportunities, equal treatment and equal outcomes in the context of Swedish education. *Equal opportunity strategies* focus on exogenous determinants of school success: factors relating to the students' background, i.e. the human, social, cultural and material resources at their disposal which are likely to foster learning. Although the education system can not be held responsible for inequalities in resources (and therefore remains largely unaffected by equal opportunity strategies), it can contribute to overcoming such exogenous inequalities through specific interventions. *Equal treatment strategies*, by contrast, deal with endogenous mechanisms (within the school system) that may generate inequalities and discrimination. Unequal treatment may relate to socially or culturally biased curricula, legal barriers to access, or discriminatory behaviour, which often follows from a lack of mutual understanding, due to social or cultural distance between stakeholders. *Equal outcome strategies* emphasise the need to equalise the distribution of outcomes of education across social or ethnic groups characterised by unequal a priori opportunities. In other words, equal outcomes require policies that typically involve elements of positive discrimination.

5.1 Equal opportunity strategies

As educational opportunities depend on many factors relating to the pupil's background (material wealth, parental support, health, cultural background etc.) equal opportunity strategies are typically multifaceted. In this section, we confine the discussion to the strategies that are most relevant in the Swedish context. Financial instruments do belong to this category but will be left aside because they have already been discussed in section 4.

5.1.1 Pre-school

The beneficial effects of pre-school programmes for children at risk have been extensively demonstrated in the literature (see e.g. Smyth & McCabe, 2000; Heckman, 1999; OECD, 2001). Sweden is probably one of the only countries in the world with an integrated approach between the entire pre-school period (ages 1-5) and basic education. In 1996, responsibility for pre-school and school-age child care was transferred from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Science; in 1998, a national curriculum was implemented for the pre-school with the aim of (a) integrating care, learning and nurturing, and (b) ensuring 'an equivalent pre-school of high quality' nation-wide.

Despite its non-compulsory character, participation in pre-school has been growing very rapidly throughout the 1990s. In 2004, 76% of all children aged 1-5 were participating. Since 2003, the right to pre-school was extended to parents in unemployment or parental leave. Universal pre-school is guaranteed for all children aged 4-5, free of charge for up to 525 hours a year. For supplementary hours (and other childcare activities), fees are restricted between 1 and 3% of parents' annual income, depending on the number of children. For children at age 6, a pre-school class programme of 525 hours is guaranteed,

Curiously, the enormous importance attached to pre-school is mirrored neither in universally gratis provision, nor in compulsory participation. According to the local authorities and professionals that we

interviewed during the visits, the fees for children from needy families are often covered by municipal social services, while parents on welfare are strongly encouraged – if not obliged – to put their children in pre-school. This is particularly the case with immigrant families, where children need to be socialised and learn Swedish in preparation for school. Moreover, specific measures are taken to reach out to children at risk and to tailor services to the needs of children requiring special support. In ‘open pre-schools’, children who do not speak Swedish can be accompanied by their parents as an intermediate step; some municipalities have set up (free of charge) ‘special language pre-school groups’ where immigrant children are educated in two languages. Children in need of special support are catered for in smaller groups; and the use of individual development plans is becoming increasingly common. Specialised assistance from a language teacher, a ‘research teacher’ or a social pedagogue is provided to children as well as educators. Individual progress is evaluated with the parents twice a year. The Backskippan preschool in Karlskrona is an example of good practice in this regard.

However, it is unclear how widespread such good practice is across the country. As mentioned earlier, the national evaluation of the pre-school programme, published by the NAE in 2004, is very critical about the lack of ‘equivalence’ of pre-school across municipalities (Skolverket, 2004/239). To begin with, the report concludes that the economic downturn of the 1990s – combined with rising enrolment rates – have raised financial pressure and affected the quality of provision through an increase of the average group size (to 14.6 in the age group 1-3, and 19.7 in age group 3-5). Further, while the number of children in need of special support has also increased (due to larger group size, more difficult living conditions, immigration and maybe also higher demands from the new curriculum), evaluators record unacceptable disparities in quality between municipalities – and even within the same municipality: *“In a decentralised organisation, there is a risk that pre-schools facing worse conditions do not receive sufficient support to carry out their tasks. The evaluation shows that lack of support in terms of resources and management appears to affect primarily pre-schools in low-resource catchment areas.”* (Skolverket, 2004/239, p.33). The report suggests that disparities in quality are due in some cases to a lack of targeting (to match differences in need) and, in other cases, to inadequate overall resources.

Swedish officials (and also school personnel) argue that the non-take up (20 percent at age 2) can be ascribed to the required co-payment which, for very low income parents, may appear prohibitive. It is likely that non-take up is also related to the ‘15-hour per week maximum’ free provision, and to the persisting lack of access (depending on local circumstances) for parents who are unemployed or on parental leave. Since it is this clientele – and in particular immigrant children – that would benefit most from full participation in pre-schools, this legal filter appears counter-productive from an equity point of view. One might hypothesize (although no hard data are available) that later learning problems and school drop-out is correlated with whether the child attended pre-school.

Overall, we conclude from this brief review that the Swedish pre-school system is very well developed; there is nevertheless room for further improvement by (i) removing the remaining barriers and (ii) raising minimum quality standards.

5.1.2 Integrated approaches to education

If it is true that the chances for educational success depend to a large extent on the individual’s access to material, social, cultural and human resources, then a broad conception of education is a prerequisite for equal opportunities for learners from lower socio-economic strata. The integration of health care, cultural development, social skills development etc. into educational services involves a strong potential for disadvantaged groups in particular.

From this point of view, the Swedish education system stands out as an example of good practice. Starting at pre-school level, the national curriculum builds on the assumption that “*care, nurturing and learning together form a coherent whole*” (quoted in Skolverket, 2004/239, p.10). Great importance is attached to a set of ‘fundamental values’ which include respect, tolerance, solidarity, gender equality etc. The comprehensive compulsory school curriculum is characterised by its wide scope of subjects: arts, English, home and consumer studies, physical education and health, mathematics, music, natural sciences and social studies (geography, history, religious studies, civics), crafts and Swedish. Besides, Sweden is known for its extensive provision of leisure time centres, which are supplementing school at all times when schools are closed. Unfortunately, in many cases access to leisure time centres is restricted to children with working or studying parents.

Increased competition between schools, as well as the commitment of local authorities and school heads to social equality, have boosted the ‘profiling’ of schools, i.e. there are strong incentives to differentiate themselves from other schools through a specific pedagogy. Sunnadals ‘Hela Världans Skolan’ in Karlskrona provides a nice example of how a school caters for an integrated approach to education in a socially disadvantaged area, where immigrants make up for 40% of the overall population: The school has pupils from 45 nationalities, and 80% of the pupils do not have Swedish as their mother tongue. 65% of the children come from low-income homes (less than 10.000 SEK/month) and most parents have a low level of education.

In response to the immense language and integration problem, the school offers preparation classes for children of asylum seekers, reception classes for newly arriving children, and native language courses in 6 languages. Integrated child care is provided after school hours up to the end of primary school, while the school’s youth centre caters for adolescents. In order to promote the pupils’ health and social skills and to provide opportunities for success to students with less advanced cognitive skills, a special emphasis is put on physical and health education. Swedish reading lessons in year 2 are based on Astrid Lindgren’s books. Arts are being taught in a very active, participatory way, with exhibitions, yearly theatre productions and collaboration with the National Naval Museum. Some theatre productions are integrated with lessons of mathematics, sailing, cooking, crafts, history and/or civic education. In the latest production immigrant children commemorate the crimes against humanity committed during the war between Sweden and Denmark in 1564. The play has been staged in other schools during history lessons.

Given the very different gender roles in the culture of many immigrant children, separate boys’ and girls’ groups are being accompanied by a ‘guidance counsellor’ with the aim of gradually promoting mutual respect and a sense of gender equality. Responsibilities for the canteen, the cafe, maintenance, sports, the library etc are being shared with groups of students from grades 4-9. The school also created a Montessorri department.

At upper secondary level, the Fryshuset centre is a remarkable example of an integrated concept of education that responds in a most creative manner to specific needs of a multicultural urban youth. This example will be discussed at length in section 5.2.2 below.

In adult education, too, the ‘lifewide’ perspective is taken seriously, as is demonstrated by the large share of liberal adult education (the sector of folk high schools and study circles) as distinct from the more formal municipal adult education Komvux. Rooted in the popular movements since the 19th Century, there are currently 10 large study associations organising 320,000 study circles and 215,000 cultural programmes a year – and 147 folk high schools offering short- and long-term courses to more than 200,000 participants yearly. These study circles and courses are funded mainly by the state, although activities are typically designed ‘bottom-up’. Priority is given to educationally, socially and culturally disadvantaged groups, people with a foreign background, the disabled and the unemployed. Although folk high schools are not allowed to teach Swedish for immigrants, many immigrants who do not speak Swedish participate

in integrated courses with a holistic approach. Folk high schools also play an important role in the 'individual programme' at upper secondary level. Second chance education of the core subjects (English – Swedish – Maths) for young adults is part of their statutory programme. But the bulk of the activities are centred around cultural and civic themes. In its report on lifelong and lifewide learning (Skolverket, 2000, Chapter 5) the NAE emphasises the key role of liberal adult education, linked with the civil society, in developing and nurturing a democratic culture. The Agency expresses its concern about the decline in political involvement of the population and observes a link between this tendency and the shrinking provision of adult education in this area.

5.2 Equal treatment strategies

This type of approach focuses on the avoidance of discriminatory mechanisms within the education system. Discrimination can be driven by different motives: personal benefit (homogeneous schools require less effort from the staff), 'tastes' (preference to work with peers), social pressure (e.g. from parents of the majority group), or prejudice (biased information due to cultural distance). Different types of discriminatory practice call for different countervailing strategies.

Streaming is probably one of the most deeply rooted, structural forms of unequal treatment in education. In this regard, the balanced design of the Swedish curriculum, with a comprehensive compulsory school, followed by equivalent tracks of academic and vocational education, can be seen as the most powerful tool for equity. We will not elaborate on this point here, because it was discussed at length in section 3.3. In what follows, we will briefly discuss two other strategies: legal regulation of rights, and partnership with parents and local communities.

5.2.1 Regulating freedom and rights

One generic approach consists in regulating the rights of minorities so as to guarantee them equal access to resources and markets. For example, in the context of free school choice, subtle forms of discrimination and segregation may result from socially or culturally biased sorting mechanisms: parents from lower social backgrounds are less well informed and less mobile; poorer test scores may result from language barriers, etc. The experience of Stockholm where, paradoxically, free school choice combined with achievement-based admission rules has aggravated social and cultural segregation rather than relieving it,⁸ calls for further reflection about limiting conditions that should be imposed in order to avoid such perverse effects.

The problem of unfair treatment connected with free choice in education is similar to many others, where provision of public utility services is organised in quasi-markets (energy, communication etc.). Equal access to high-quality services (at affordable cost) necessitates legal action to guarantee that users are not excluded or disadvantaged. Although some rules have already been imposed (such as absence of tuition fees), further restrictions can be thought of to prevent indirect discrimination by schools. For example, the question arises whether / how admission rules based on prior achievement in a competitive market can be reconciled with equal treatment, when customers have unequal (material, cultural, social, human....) resources. Underlying the legal issue is a normative debate, how the 'right to education' should be interpreted: if it is directly linked with human dignity, then the meritocratic reference to prior achievement seems unjustified. The answer may be different by level of education, with the right to basic education being more absolute than the right to tertiary education. Curiously, Sweden has an 'Equal treatment of university students' act', yet until now there does not seem to be a similar act at other levels of education.

⁸ See section 4.2

The government has now appointed a special commissioner to prepare the ground for further legal initiatives in pre-school, primary, secondary and adult education.

Specifically with regard to students with a foreign background, it has been pointed out (Hällgren and Weiner, 2001) that while various regulatory frameworks about the school curriculum incorporate teaching about democracy, respect, tolerance, and equality, few suggestions have been made about how changes in attitudes can be developed. In this regard, teacher education programmes have been the subject of criticism for paying little attention to the question of anti-racist education in schools. Indeed, the view has been expressed that Sweden, despite its international reputation for human rights and democratic values, was relatively slow to recognise that racism exists not least among the young (ibid). However, it is acknowledged that at the end of the 1990s, the Swedish government took an active interest in promoting national and international policies aimed at combating racism, intolerance and xenophobia and gave its support to development work undertaken with schools to enhance the understanding of anti-racist education; for example, support was given to the development of a website, Swedkid, funded by the European Union, a project involving several countries, that links anti-racism, technology and education. Swedkid seeks to characterise and exemplify the processes of 'every day' racism in society (Gaine, Hällgren and Weiner, 2005).

The OECD team was introduced to a number of other education initiatives supported by funds from a variety of agencies for developing inter-cultural/anti-racist material for use in schools; these included the work by the African-Swedish Association associated with its website ([www:Geteducated.se](http://www.Geteducated.se)).

From what we heard and have read, we have formed the opinion that operationalising anti-racism within the curriculum appears to be an area where more work and of higher quality needs to be done in Sweden. Suggestions have been made that such work needs to include: (i) the provision of more curriculum information to teachers; (ii) making interculturalism/multiculturalism/antiracism a core area of initial teacher education; (iii) engaging in further research and development work in schools; and (iv) producing guidelines for schools and other educational settings (Weiner, 2002). We support these suggestions.

5.2.2 *Strengthening partnership with parents and local communities*

We believe that, in advanced societies, the remaining risk of discrimination is often attributable to imperfect information ('prejudice') and should therefore be combated or avoided mainly through improved *communication* between stakeholders. Better information flows generate improved mutual understanding, reduce the risk of prejudice, biased expectations (Pygmalion effects), inadequate behaviour, and conflict.

Swedish schools do not seem to have a strong tradition of partnership with parents. Formal tools for communication and participation do exist (parents' evenings, membership of school boards etc.) but they are not really suited to encourage participation of disadvantaged groups. Nor can we expect that the six-monthly individual 'development discussions' between teachers, parents and pupils, introduced in the context of the Quality Programme, will suffice to guarantee equal participation of all parents in school matters. In other countries, home-school-community liaison projects, school community action and/or genuine 'community schools' have been set up in response to this problem (Wilson et al., 2000). Such models build on a different view, where parents are seen as indispensable partners in the education of their children, rather than customers in a competitive market. Parents (as well as other parties) can help teachers understand the behaviour and needs of their children and make teaching more effective. They can also contribute with their own skills, which are diverse and often valuable complements to those of teachers. In exchange, the role of the school is defined as a resource centre for the development of the local community, which means that it gives all stakeholders (including parents) a sense of ownership and aims to respond in a flexible way to their needs.

Admittedly, the transfer of the responsibility for education to the municipal level during the 1990s must have contributed to a sense of ownership and stronger networking between schools and other local stakeholders. The OECD team had the opportunity to visit some examples of good practice, but felt that these were rather exceptional. In section 5.1.2, we discussed the example of Sunnadals *Hela Världans Skolan*, where local organisations (such as the National Naval Museum, the music club, the athletics club) collaborate with the school in a ‘difficult’ multicultural environment: The school itself has developed specific ‘non-school related’ services with the explicit aim of networking with the local community. For example, a cafe and meeting centre have been set up in the main hall of the school, which can be used by the neighbourhood for their activities, and where study circles for adults are being organised in the evenings, with support from the municipality (parenting courses, intercultural evenings, meetings with employers and the unemployment office etc.). The school psychologist has been assigned the responsibility (among other things) to liaise with parents and the local community. Sunnadals school has been selected by the National Agency for School Improvement as one of 20 pilot schools called ‘idea schools for multicultural education’.

Another example that deserves special mention in this context is *Fryshuset*, a youth centre located South of the centre of Stockholm. Fryshuset was created in 1984 by the YMCA, and is now ‘owned’ by young people and the local community. Apart from cultural and sports activities, the centre soon developed innovative social projects to prevent violence and promote social (re-)integration in a multicultural urban environment. We met young leaders of three projects: the *Shadaf Heroes*, a movement of muslim boys standing up against violence towards girls in their community; *Exit*, an organisation assisting youngsters to leave the neo-nazi movement; and *Calm Street*, a group of unemployed young people hired to patrol and prevent violence in the public transport sector, which has now grown out to a movement liaising with local communities to enhance social integration. Calm Street also offers training in conflict resolution, first aid, law and ethics etc. to ‘juniors’. The *Knowledge Centre*, an upper secondary school combining sports and cultural education with the core curriculum of gymnasium, is the education pillar of Fryshuset. The school has 850 students. Actually, the structure of Fryshuset – with its 30 or so divisions and projects in many different areas - is such that the school has emanated from the demand of the local community – rather than the other way round. There is also a *Fryshuset Resource School*, a project offering the equivalent of the individual programme to youngsters who have failed in compulsory (junior secondary) school.

5.2.3 *The social skills training of teachers*

Equal treatment is more than just a feature of the education system: it is also a basic attitude and a skill among the staff of educational institutions. Teachers, for example, must be aware of the influence of their pupils’ social background on educational opportunities in order to tackle inequalities in the best possible way. They must be able to detect potential social and cultural bias in information flows in order to avoid misunderstanding, inaccurate communication and discriminatory behaviour. They must know what works and what doesn’t in promoting equity in education. These attitudes, knowledge and skills must be developed through teachers’ education and in-service training.

The OECD team visited the Stockholm Institute of Education, which has trained one in every six teachers across Sweden, where current teacher training programmes were discussed. In response to the dramatic shortage of qualified teachers, teachers’ education has been reformed in 2001. In this context, intercultural education has become a core subject in the general part of the training. The term ‘intercultural’ is used in its generic sense, referring to the gender, sexual orientation and social class dimensions as well as ethnicity.⁹ Despite the obvious interest of this subject, one wonders to what extent equity can be reduced to

⁹ The OECD team saw examples of the way in which ‘intercultural’ was being interpreted in a school with a high proportion of children from ethnic minority groups. The teachers in the pre-school at Sunnadalskolen brought cultural differences into the curriculum through talking about the religious festivals celebrated by

a matter of culture. Social inequalities are also – at least, partly – a matter of unequal resources and power, and therefore require a broader approach. Moreover, educational strategies to tackle inequalities – other than intercultural education – do not seem to be part of the teachers’ curriculum.

On the other hand, a strong point in the Institute’s strategy is its campaign to recruit men and students from ethnic minorities for a teacher’s career. Diversity among teachers is obviously a good way to break down cultural barriers with pupils from minorities. This applies not only to ethnic background, but also to gender. Some professionals have argued that the extreme feminisation of the teacher profession in Sweden explains part of the poor performance of some foreign-born pupils, who have never seen female teachers in their country. The staff of the Stockholm Institute of Education showed convincingly how the implications of this campaign for diversity among teachers were taken on board – up to special courses in ‘academic reading and writing’ targeted at students with a non-academic or foreign background.

5.3 Equal outcomes strategies

When social inequalities are so intractable that equal opportunity and equal treatment policies are considered insufficient to equalise outcomes, the principle of positive discrimination can be applied, which involves a preferential – rather than equal – treatment of minority groups. This principle is often applied in the funding of targeted education programmes in favour of disabled children, immigrants, socially disadvantaged children etc.

As we saw in Chapter 4, targeted schemes on the *national* level are rare in Sweden. One ongoing programme (worth SEK 2 bn over a period of five years) is focused on the recruitment and training of additional pre-school teachers, in response to the great shortage of teachers which is seen as a threat to the quality of pre-school. It is unclear to what extent this measure is also linked to enhanced services for disadvantaged groups. The most recent example of a targeted programme is a SEK 225 million programme for schools in highly segregated areas launched by the Minister for Schools, Ibrahim Baylan, to promote bilingual education in particular. A related ambition is to develop 50 pilot schools standing out as innovative in the field of integration of immigrant children (Sunnadals Skolan, mentioned above, is one of these ‘idea schools’).

A common feature of these national targeted schemes is their temporary nature: after a few years of ‘campaigning’, measures are supposed to be mainstreamed whereas new targeted budgets will respond to new needs. The campaigns can be seen as subsidies for the development of new methods or resources, not as a structural subsidy targeted at a specific group of pupils.

As regards priority programmes on the *local* level, there appears to be many degrees of discretion and little co-ordination. Within the limits of the law (e.g. regarding equal treatment of public and private schools) local authorities may or may not decide to provide priority funding for specific groups. The bottom line is often some extra funding for language courses (Swedish as a Second Language), whereas in other cases specialised pedagogical or social services are provided. We have not seen any examples of transparent and generally applicable rules across an entire municipality.

children of different faiths, and by recognising positively differences in food and dress. Whether multicultural perspectives are incorporated in schools which do not have ethnic minority children on roll was not a matter that was explored with teachers, but this particular school did express the view that there were others that had a mixed intake like its own that had done little to develop much by way of whole school policies for inclusion.

A possible explanation for this apparent lack of financial priorities is the fact that the mainstream system already prioritises students who need special support implicitly: the individual programme, the Swedish as a Second Language course, reception classes, tuition in the mother tongue are part of this mainstream provision, and therefore ‘naturally’ deserve the resources that are needed. Nevertheless, the absence of any national rules in this regard inevitably means that special support for otherwise identical pupils is provided in different amounts depending on where they live.

5.4 Tools for the monitoring of equity in education

As referred to in earlier chapters of this report, and in the Country Analytical Report, the public administration of the education system underwent a far-reaching decentralisation process when, in the early 1990s, the Swedish state changed its role from steering by rules to steering by goals and results. But by the mid-1990s, doubts about the adequacy of existing steering measures were expressed coupled with growing disquiet about the municipalities’ ability to take responsibility for the implementation of the new arrangements at local level. As a consequence, new or enhanced steering measures were designed to operate at both central and local level, most of them quality assurance and control procedures. These procedures were couched in a language designed to support good professional working relationships between the centre and the local; they stressed the importance of ‘communication’ and ‘dialogue’, the use of ‘self evaluation’ and ‘self regulation’, and personal and professional ‘agency’ at all levels. This section examines some of the measures that were taken to improve the steering of the education system towards greater quality and equivalence:

- the splitting up of the National Agency for Education (NAE) into two bodies, one retaining the title of National Agency for Education, tasked with quality control and having educational inspection as its main task, and the other, a separate National Agency for School Improvement (NASI);
- the requirement that municipalities and individual schools should submit annual written reports as part of the continuous evaluation of their provision in meeting goals, the rationale being that the reports should function as aids to improve the school’s results and their work in fulfilling goals;
- the introduction of an internet-based results and quality information system (SIRIS);
- the provision of value-added information about schools (SALSA);
- the introduction of new tests for monitoring purposes.

5.4.1 The National Agency for Education (NAE)

Role

The NAE is the central authority established to ensure that national objectives for pre-school activities, school-aged childcare, schools and adult education are achieved. Like the NASI, its sister agency, the NAE is an independent body, a fact that is given prominence in the official reports of the government and the publications of the Agency itself. What ‘independence’ means in practice could be more grounded in rhetoric than reality but acquaintance with some of the Agency’s publications, modes of working and outcomes would seem to give substance to the term, a matter which is extremely important when dealing

with politically controversial areas, such as equity. For example, the approach taken by the NAE to research, monitoring and evaluation may be said to provide certain safeguards regarding its objectivity and breadth of understanding. While the NAE does not have a research team itself, it does commission university researchers to carry out projects. This means that the design of the studies, including the approach to sampling, the use of both quantitative and qualitative instruments, and analysis, is carried on outside the Agency. This also goes for test development. NAE reports of research, evaluation and development work specify in detail the methodology that was deployed, and are explicit about where findings indicate areas of difficulty or weakness. Examples of the NAE's research and development have included studies on the teaching of national minority and immigrant languages, and work on social inclusion in collaboration with the Regional Development Centre at the University of Malmo involving schools in areas where a very high proportion of the population is from immigrant backgrounds (see Beijer and Bolin, 2001). There also seems to be good working relationships between the NAE, Statistics Sweden and academic researchers associated with the longitudinal program 'Evaluation through Follow-up' (ETF), a study that monitors the educational pathways of children from their first school years through to adulthood. The fact that reports on the concept and implementation of school choice have been commissioned and published by the NAE - the third one, of high quality, produced in 2003, provides a wide-ranging exposition of the concept, and its application, including a stringent analysis of the relationship of choice with equivalence, raising questions about the extent to which Swedish schools can and should form a coherent system in future - is indicative of a willingness to be open about the effects of areas of policy where there are conflicting political values.

The NAE's supervisory role is to ensure that the provisions of the Education Act are complied with and the rights of the individual student are respected¹⁰. The OECD team noted the huge range of Agency tasks crossing a gamut of activities associated with the management and development of curriculum, testing and assessment, head teacher training, the authorisation of independent schools, the allocation of state funding to municipalities and schools, the use of targeted funds, and engagement in monitoring and inspection. Based on this work, every three years the NAE presents its report on the public school system to government and Parliament; this overview forms the basis of the government's national development plan for schools.

The task of supervision mainly takes the form of inspection. Formalised inspection by the Agency was only introduced in 2003 and has been accorded the highest priority; it is to be undertaken with the explicit aim of bringing about improvement – and equivalence - across the system. Inspection has been established as a joint venture between the NAE and local institutions; the municipalities and schools are expected to participate in the inspection by reporting on equal provision and quality through their own processes of evaluation and action planning.

Monitoring and Inspection Models

In the late 1990s, the NAE attempted to systematise its monitoring of 'equivalence' through the development of a model for making the concept operational (Wildt-Persson & Gunnar Rosengren, 2001). Instead of formulating a precise definition of equivalence, - an impossible task - the Agency identified three critical areas to which the concept was related: (i) equal access (regardless of gender, location, social and economic circumstances); (ii) equivalent education in terms of processes (the curriculum and pedagogical offer, time available for learning, the quality of teaching and school leadership, student

¹⁰ The role of the Agency in relation to individual rights seems to have led the NAE to intervene on occasion in some school disputes in order to establish fair treatment, such as in an instance of bullying in a particular school (see Skolverket, publication: 'Follow-up'); in these instances, the Agency has assumed something like an ombudsman capacity.

support systems, and assessment); (iii) equal value (comparable results in terms of e.g. transition to higher education from the different educational programs within upper secondary school, preparedness for work and/or study, student attitudes such as respect for others).

It can be argued that the Swedish Education Act holds that equal opportunity should be the main concern of the Agency not so much equality of outcomes; however, the current approach to inspection attempts to work with all three areas of equivalence broken down into seven categories. The assessment of equal value, which relates to equal outcomes, is carried out through probing the general category 'Results' under the headings of (i) Norms and Values and (ii) Knowledge. Equal access and equivalent education processes, both associated with equal opportunity or equal treatment, are assessed within the category 'The Operation' under the headings of (iii) Work Environment and Participation, (iv) Teaching Activities and Tuition, (v) Steering, Administration and Quality System; and within the category 'Conditions' under the categories (vi) Access and (vii) Resources (see Skolverket, 2004a).

Using these areas as criteria for judgement, inspections have been scheduled to take place across all municipalities between 2004 and 2009 in order to examine their provision in pre-school classes, compulsory schools, upper secondary schools, special schools, and adult education, and their accountability for preschool activities and care for school children. By the end of the six years, if all goes according to plan, inspection reports will have been presented to each municipality and school with concrete requirements or suggestions for action. These reports are also placed on the national database providing detailed information about the system as a whole (see SIRIS below).

5.4.2 Swedish National Agency for School Improvement (NASI)

The range of monitoring, evaluation and supervisory functions of the NAE referred to above clearly present powerful tools for addressing equity issues across the system. The NASI has a different role, one designed to take over on some of the areas where the NAE left off. The NASI was established, according to the Skolverket website, in order 'to initiate and support local school development and improvement to ensure high quality and equal opportunities for pupils and students. The Agency targets pre-school (preschool activities and care for school children), school and Adult Education. Set up as a method for providing support and development per se, the NASI is situated in six areas of the country; it has five departments (educational development, quality work, analysis, ICT, and administrative services) that provide wide-ranging services most, it appears, of a responsive and remedial kind. At present, priority has been given to work in the areas of support for basic skills and knowledge, and development in areas of high social and ethnic segregation. The OECD team was informed that the NASI was presently supporting 35 municipalities where there were underachieving schools in areas of low socio-economic status and ethnic minority segregation. The Improvement teams were working to improve the quality of school leadership in these areas. The work of the NASI is being recognised as important for ethnic minority groups; for example, the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination recently recommended that the NASI should be re-commissioned to continue its work on 'forestalling the alienation of Romany children in school, and to develop methods for forwarding the educational situation of Romanies' (Report on Discrimination against Romanies in Sweden, 2004). It was not possible during the visit - or since - to obtain much detailed information about the NASI's work on inclusion in schools possibly because the Agency is still finding its feet in terms of organisational and communication processes but our initial impressions were that the work of the Agency was spread quite thinly over a very wide area. Potentially, if resourced adequately, the NASI should make a substantial contribution to the development of quality and equivalence in schools and municipalities through its expansion of support networks, role in teacher development and dissemination of good practice.

5.4.3 *SIRIS*

Reforms in the management of the education system in the early 1990s included initiatives to strengthen the provision of information about schools to the public as part of a drive for greater transparency. The principle of open and public reporting of results is seen as fundamental in a democratic system; access to such information assists in creating debate on educational objectives, financing and organisation, and is particularly important if educational activities display large differences in equivalence and quality. Another objective is to help parents make informed choices in the context of the new quasi-market system. Against this background, the NAE developed a web-based information system that includes both quantitative and qualitative data, SIRIS¹¹. SIRIS was made publicly available in 2001 and is said to have quickly brought about a huge increase in access to educational information. The contents of SIRIS include (Skolverket, 2002):

- leaving certificates (final marks) from the ninth year of compulsory school and the third year of upper secondary school (collected on a sample basis);
- results from the national tests in the ninth year of compulsory school and the third year of upper secondary school (also a sample);
- basic system statistics: numbers of pupils and teachers, pupil-teacher ratios, teachers' qualifications, costs;
- NAE quality inspections reports (also a sample year on year until 2009): a national summary and individual reports for each of the municipalities and schools visited;
- municipalities' and schools' own yearly quality reports;
- information about the award of special state grants to particular municipalities to increase student-staff ratios and provide additional staff development; the grant applications and follow-up documentation from the municipalities are available;
- a tool (SALSA)¹² for analysing the relationships between school results for Grade 9 and local factors such as gender, the educational background of parents, and foreign background. SALSA aims to provide 'value-added information to enable more 'nuanced' analysis of a school's results (Skolverket, 2002).

The combination of statistical and qualitative data within one database does offer an extremely important resource for a variety of stakeholders: school principals, administrators and advisers at national and local level, researchers, students, parents, and interested citizens as a whole, including the media. It has been established in a way that provides analytical support and help in interpreting data 'on-screen' in order to use the information and obtain answers to questions.

¹¹ SIRIS is an acronym for the NAE's information system on results and quality: Skolverkets Internetbaserade Resultat –och kvalitetsInformations System.

¹² SALSA is an acronym for Skolverkets Arbsverktyg för Lokala.

5.4.4 *Issues arising*

The various mechanisms referred to above demonstrate the way the Swedish education system has developed an increasingly hybrid nature: on the one hand, deploying the philosophy and means that support local autonomy and the operation of a quasi-market situation while, on the other, adopting greater measures of supervision at the centre through quality assurance and control mechanisms.

As far as the enhancement of equity is concerned, some specific points can be raised about the effectiveness of these mechanisms.

(i) *'Teeth'*

The OECD team repeatedly asked questions about whether inspection had 'teeth'. The documentation put out by the NAE to provide information about inspection clearly emphasises 'communication', 'dialogue' and action 'for improvement' but, at the same time, contains statements about its ability to *require* corrective action. What 'requiring' might be based on, what it entails and how it can be enforced remains completely unclear in the case of public schools. No information is given about any special measures in terms of either organisational shake-up, extra support, professional or financial, or any kind of sanctions that might be applied. Can the NAE intervene and revoke educational autonomy in the interest of individuals' rights to quality education? Are the municipalities able to take action? In the case of an independent school, the NAE is entitled to withdraw its licence and is known to have done so in one or two cases. But in general, the fact that there are dual government and administrative systems for managing, monitoring and supervising education – the national and the local – suggests that the *requirement* to carry out corrective action may mean very little in practice. We suggest that clear indications about the procedures used to require and implement improvements at any level would be beneficial and would help restore the confidence in some quarters that the pursuit of equity is alive.

(ii) *Local Capacity in Monitoring and Evaluation*

Issues of compliance that are raised in the above section may be related to political differences between the centre and the local but they almost certainly stem as well from difficulties in the actual wherewithal on the part of municipalities and schools to carry out the requirements. The new governance system built on the prerequisites that the municipalities had sufficient resources and knowledge to accomplish the tasks defined in the national curricula and syllabuses taking local and individual needs into account. Once it became clear that there were large variations across the country, an Ordinance was passed in 1997 obliging municipalities and schools to produce an annual written quality report as part of their continuous assessment of the extent to which they had achieved educational goals and the measures that were needed to ensure improvement. The reports were clearly linked to goals and results and, as mentioned in relation to inspection, were to form an important part of the whole steering operation as part of the 'dialogue' with the state. However, of the 289 municipalities only 228 provided reports, and of these only 70% were said to have met the requirements of the Ordinance; the proportion of schools that submitted reports was even lower (Söderberg, Wirén and Ramstedt, 2004). It thus became clear that the monitoring and evaluation of equivalence entailed a large-scale expansion of capacity building at the local administrative and advisory level coupled with the professional development of school principals. During the OECD visit it was not clear that all municipalities had the educational resources or infrastructure - time, finance and personnel with distinct expertise - to undertake the task of monitoring and evaluation to a high enough standard, something that is clearly important if the data collected as the basis for analysing equivalence is to be valid and reliable. The supporting role of the NASI is valuable in this regard through, for example, establishing networks, school principal training and disseminating good practice. We note that the NAE is positive

about the greater rapprochement and broader dialogue with responsible authorities that has taken place from the 1990s in establishing approaches to steering; nonetheless, as might be expected, it still sees major differences in schools, between schools and between different principal organisers (Skolverket, 2004b, p13). The causes of some of these differences will be financial, not solely related to school effectiveness, but the NAE is silent about this.

(iii) *Ethnic Minorities*

Data

We suspect that there is too much caution in Sweden about collecting ethnic minority data. We note that the report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), made public in June 2005, stated (Para 98) that data on the national and ethnic origin of individuals are not collected in Sweden although there were no outright prohibitions on the collection of this information. SIRIS, for example, does not contain this level of data. The ECRI report recommends (Para 99) that the Swedish authorities improve their monitoring systems by collecting information broken down into categories such as religion, language, nationality, national or ethnic origin and to ensure that this is done in all cases with due respect for the principles of confidentiality, informed consent and the voluntary self-identification of persons as belonging to a particular group. It was clear in the OECD team's visits that schools were reluctant to gather specific information on the basis that any attempt to do so would be an infringement on private matters. While sensitivity is certainly necessary, we support the ECRI recommendation since, if handled with all due safeguards, such data would enable much greater awareness of the need to improve the position of disadvantaged groups.

Inspection focus

The acquisition of information about equitable treatment undoubtedly forms the basis of the regular inspection focus set out in the publication on inspection (Skolverket, 2004a). The inspection model as a whole represents systematic thinking on the part of the NAE about the way equal opportunities, access and outcomes are to act as guiding principles both for the processes of inspection, the nature of evidence that is collected and the judgements that are required about quality. The introductory explanation 'Why have educational inspections?' reiterates the basic principle that all children, young people and adults shall have access to equivalent care and education in the various activities and types of school, regardless of where they participate or their cultural, linguistic, or socio-economic background. The criteria for assessing quality (ibid, pp16-21) are lengthy, probably beyond any inspection's capability in the time available, but they serve to provide indicators of what is expected. It is possible to see here the notion of equivalence in quality being applied to equity. Undoubtedly the publication assists in this way with capacity building at school and municipality level in the task of monitoring and evaluating equity.

But we suggest that there could possibly be more of a lead in the text than is present about monitoring the provision for and outcomes of ethnic minority pupils. For example, all of the inspectors' questions, given as examples, are posed in general terms about *all* students: 'Do the students have democratic values?' 'Do the students feel secure?' 'Do students receive support in learning?' There are two exceptions: 'Are there differences in grades between girls and boys?' 'Do students with physical disabilities have access to an education that is equal to that provided for other students?' A specific question associated with ethnic/racial minority pupils is not included, which is surprising. This omission may be said to be small in an otherwise comprehensive description of inspection practice but it bears out some of the other impressions we formed in discussion and through other background literature about the relative diffidence - some would assume lack of interest - about giving examples of practice or probing differentials

associated with groups other than gender. We think that being more specific about inspection of provision in relation to pupils' race and ethnicity would enhance understanding about social and economic circumstances, funding issues, as well as teaching and learning, and have the effect of raising expectations across the board.

(iv) *Monitoring equivalence and constructing the market: SIRIS*

By all accounts there has been surprisingly little debate within the Swedish education system itself about the introduction of the internet-based information system, SIRIS, even though it is being used by the media for the creation of league tables. Information provided by the NAE refers to SIRIS as presenting information on results and quality in an intelligible way in accordance with the Swedish principle of public access; it indicates at the same time that a degree of caution should be exercised in using the information by stating that far from everything meant by 'quality' is reflected in the data. But beyond the provision of information, it is now generally recognised that SIRIS as a public electronic service also plays an important role in helping to materialize the education market for citizens (Ranerup, 2004). The report by the Swedish Ministry of Finance, 'National Report on Economic Reform of the Product and Capital Markets' (2004), produced in order to demonstrate Sweden's progress in integrating the Lisbon Strategy competition policy into national policy, refers to the use of test results in SIRIS in its discussion of the improvement of the functioning of markets through benchmarking. In its dual function, - monitoring equivalence while aiding choice and the growth of the market - SIRIS clearly serves both social and liberal democratic policies. The scope for the NEA to carry out regulatory activities in relation to SIRIS lies mainly in the extent to which it can provide data that has been validated as true as far as possible. In this regard, the introduction of SALSA for use by the public, as well as the education profession, is important in demonstrating the different variables associated with attainment, particularly the contribution that a school itself makes to a student's progress. It is important that the NAE continues to stress in its publications that value-added is a tool not a policy nor an end in itself; its findings should lead to action rather than legitimating current standards in schools.

(v) *Assessment, grading and equity*

Issues related to equity and its association with reliability and validity have emerged strongly concerning assessment and grading practices in schools, to some extent as a by-product of SIRIS and the creation of league tables. These issues will be examined in greater depth in section 5.4.6 below.

5.4.5 *Teacher assessment*

As is well known, Sweden has very few examinations, certificates or grades in comparison with other countries, especially the UK. The assessment system that was devised in the mid-1990s to complement the curriculum reforms accords to a large extent with a model of formative assessment, an approach to assessment that is recognised through research in education to support learning (see OECD, 2005). To begin with, the old norm-referenced system of awarding grades was replaced by a criterion-referenced system related to the newly defined curriculum goals. This reform could be said to be a positive step per se in creating greater equity since, in principle, it meant that the criteria for assessment and grading would be explicit thus enabling greater access to learning. Procedures for review, diagnosis and feedback were also established as part of the whole system. Schools are required to organise meetings between teachers, students and the students' parents or guardians - Personal Development Dialogues - on at least one occasion per school term for the purpose of reviewing student progress and providing feedback. No grades are awarded for subjects before Years 8 and 9 in the compulsory school. Instead of marks or grades,

schools are required to give students progress reports¹³. Students experiencing difficulties with schoolwork are given the right to remedial support, in some cases resulting in specific action plans.

However, particular difficulties have arisen about fairness, consistency and access in the implementation of criterion-referenced assessment as part of everyday classroom practice. This is a common problem internationally. The NAE suggested (2004b) two main reasons to explain why this had been the case in Sweden: (i) an overload of curriculum goals in some subjects, coupled with the inclusion of broader goals for knowledge acquisition concerned with processes and perspectives, and (ii) insufficient information about what constituted attainment at the various grades. A lack of guidance at national, local and school level was seen to have caused some of the problems but, at the same time, it was recognised that new syllabuses in some cases had been designed deliberately in a less detailed manner as part of a move to extend teacher autonomy in devising approaches. The fact that both these matters had led to differences in interpretation by teachers and, in some subjects, very little dialogue with students, was acknowledged as a cause for concern; indeed, the NAE expressed anxiety (ibid, p60) that there was now a sufficient lack of equivalence in assessment to have an impact on the legal rights of pupils.

For such a view to be acknowledged at national level points to a genuine commitment to translating equity issues into everyday classroom assessment. The Agency suggests (ibid, p53) that a solution to the problems might lie in decreasing the number of goals – ‘without reducing the level of ambition’ – and, at the same time, providing more detailed specifications. However, the NAE is also aware that over-specification commonly leads to curriculum narrowing, and works against other values associated with beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning, and the importance of supporting the professionalism of teachers. In our view, the NAE’s mode of identifying the complex issues involved in assessment practice and its attempt to solve problems associated with equal access and opportunities while maintaining its commitment to other values demonstrates its own professionalism in these matters.

5.4.6 Tests

Testing until recently has played a comparatively minor role in the Swedish education system. Teacher assessment has been given priority. There are a number of sound reasons for this arrangement, one of the most important being associated with validity in assessment. Judgments by teachers are usually built up over a period of time and in a range of contexts so enabling a broad understanding of pupils’ attainment to be amassed. Tests, on the other hand, are based on one-off occasions covering a limited sample of tasks. Teacher assessment is thus seen as having higher validity value than tests. Where teacher assessment requires strengthening is in its reliability, and this is where the kind of measures under consideration by the NAE – such as moderation procedures – are very important, particularly in assessments which relate to those made at the end of particular stages of education (summative assessments) which may have a variety of external uses.

Tests in Sweden have mainly served the role of supporting fairness and consistency, important virtues related to reliability in teachers’ judgments. Tests were introduced in order to provide teachers with exemplification of assessment criteria, assistance with the diagnosis of students’ strengths and weaknesses, and to give help with feedback on performance. In Year 9, the tests are mandatory in Swedish, mathematics and English. Teachers are obliged to use the test results in awarding their final grades to students in these subjects; the results are produced on students’ leaving certificates along with the grades provided by teachers of all other subjects (in which final tests do not exist). Tests have in fact, according to information on the NAE website, been designed for use in other Year groups, Years 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8, but

¹³ Formative assessment research suggests that descriptive comments are far more effective than grades or marks in supporting learning.

these are voluntary, a matter that might explain why the OECD team was able to obtain only very little information about their usage¹⁴. Whereas we appreciate the motives for the limited use of testing and grading in compulsory school, we wondered whether this may also mask inequalities and, at the same time, grant an excessive focus on the three core subjects.

At upper secondary level, there is a different picture. Tests are compulsory in the first course of study in the core subjects Swedish, English and Mathematics, which all students take regardless of their study programme; for students who continue to study one or more of the core subjects, national tests are also mandatory in the final year of the subject. Again, as in compulsory school, there is the same emphasis on the role of tests in supporting professional judgements at upper secondary level; teachers are provided with optional material from an item bank, which includes tests in a number of different subjects, for example, in French, physics and biology, and also in various vocational programmes (Söderberg, Wirén and Ramstedt, 2004).

The rationale for using test material to support teachers' assessment appears to be very sound. However, in our view there is enough evidence to show that the procedures for using test material need to be strengthened very considerably in order to enhance fairness in assessment as well as producing a greater range of reliable data for monitoring purposes.

Formative-summative tensions

The use of tests for monitoring and accountability has been seen in Sweden in common with other countries as introducing a different and conflicting purpose into the system, one that compounds questions about validity, reliability and equity in assessment (Söderberg, Wirén and Ramstedt, 2004; Gipps, 1994; 1996). With calls now being made for more obligatory testing and the collection of the results¹⁵, it appeared to the OECD team that the assessment system had reached a turning point where decisions were being or about to be made about the way in which formative and summative assessment could or should be combined.

Given parental choice, the growth of competition between schools, and a possible increase of public distrust in teachers, the danger that summative assessment designed for *summing up* student achievement may be dominated by summative assessment for *checking up* purposes is a strong possibility. In that case, teachers may feel compelled to teach to tests; this can lead to a narrowing of the curriculum, students becoming more focused on test performance at the expense of learning goals and, as research suggests, decreasing motivation and increased drop-out as a consequence (see OECD, 2005).

In 2003, the government asked the NAE to investigate the functioning of national testing in Sweden, which meant a complete review of the purposes of assessment and the processes currently in place. If requirements for testing are increased, we suggest that two areas can be identified where further work associated with equity is necessary. First, considerable attention will need to be given to equity issues in the design of tests including the choice of constructs on which the assessments are based, their use of context, and the types of response they expect. Second, if teacher assessment retains a central role in the awarding of grades, as may be hoped, there is even greater urgency to provide additional exemplification materials, guidance, and moderation processes that will support consistency at national, municipality and

¹⁴ It is, however, reported (Söderberg, Wirén and Ramstedt, 2004) that a majority of municipalities have made the Year 5 tests a requirement.

¹⁵ A report from the Swedish Centre for Business and Policy has already argued the need for national tests in Year 1 (cited in Söderberg, Wirén and Ramstedt, 2004).

school level. Teachers' summative assessments do not appear sufficiently robust at present to withstand pressures. Grade inflation has been identified as a strong possibility within the present system (Wikström, 2005). Indeed, it is suggested (ibid) that the increased grade point average in Swedish upper secondary schools that has been a feature from the late 1990s is not a reflection of improved achievement but a result both of the pressure on schools to show good educational results and a lack of sufficient procedures for establishing common standards. Wikström's contention is that certain groups benefited from the inflation more than others: students from a higher socio-economic background received higher grades than students from a lower socio-economic background and those born in Sweden received higher grades than immigrants (ibid). If these results are true, they add to the evidence about the variability in grading practice that the NAE has already identified (Skolverket, 2004 / 854), pointing up the equity issues in so doing.

We believe that in any reform of the Swedish assessment system, the aim should be to build on the principles already established. This would mean adopting approaches that (i) try to ensure that the focus on teaching and learning is protected; (ii) create an alignment between formative and summative assessment procedures at all levels; (iii) provide targeted funding for training and support for professionals in assessment practices at all levels; and (iv) give a further boost to the already good communication between research, policy and practice (see OECD, 2005). In our view, these aims would provide strong assistance in addressing issues relating to equity.

5.5 Conclusion - issues for debate

Summing up, the most powerful tools to promote equity in Swedish education coincide with key features of its mainstream system: a strong and successful pre-school programme, and the comprehensiveness of the curriculum – up to upper secondary education, including the availability of equivalent choices of education at upper secondary level. Other tools (integrated approaches, legal protection of students' rights, liaising with parents and the local community, educational priority programmes etc.) can be found occasionally but are not widespread. Nor is the social training of teachers strongly developed.

As regards pre-school, the NAE itself has expressed its concern about the increased financial pressure at large and the growing inequalities between pre-schools since the decentralisation of education in the early 1990s. Further, it appears rather contradictory that all but pre-school education is gratis – especially when one takes seriously the importance of early childhood stimulation for later performance. The current means-tested contribution to be paid by parents can be re-designed so that users from the lowest income groups are de facto exempted from paying fees. If targeted positive discrimination policy is considered anathema to Swedish policy principles, an attractive alternative would be to make pre-school, from age 1, universally free and possibly accompanied by strong incentives for parents to enrol their children as early as possible. This would, no doubt, help even the playing field as children arrive at formal school age. A third possibility would be to make pre-school compulsory as from age 4 or 5.

In the context of liberalisation of education 'markets', it is worth considering what rights should be guaranteed to parents and pupils in order to contain segregation and discrimination effects: for example, research suggests that it may be preferable to ban achievement-based admission rules in a context of school competition. Other legal action may be useful to prevent or combat discrimination in compulsory school or gymnasium.

Social competences should be (further) strengthened in the training of teachers. Intercultural education is just one part of that training. More emphasis should be put on the socio-economic dimension of inequality as well as on strategies to remedy inequality and underachievement in the classroom.

As regards monitoring tools and processes, the review suggests (i) that the NAE should be given more authority to enforce implementation of its recommendations; (ii) that more resources should be invested in capacity building for monitoring and evaluation at the local level; (iii) that more attention needs to be devoted to data collection about the position of ethnic minorities within the education system – as well as progress made by specific target groups; (iv) that more detailed guidelines and materials should be made available for testing, in order to ensure greater comparability of grades across schools and to promote equal opportunity in access to further education; and (v) that the role of the NASI in assisting local authorities and schools to implement equity measures needs to be strengthened, while resources for this task deserve to be raised accordingly.

6. TRANSITIONS, ACCESS AND SELECTION MECHANISMS

In contrast with the thematic approach of the previous chapters, this chapter will examine flows through the education system, by level, starting from pre-school up to adult education. The criteria for success in achieving equity include differential progression as well as overall participation rates at different stages. Official medium-term targets aim for universal transition into upper secondary school, minimum drop-out rates within the upper secondary tier, and a 50-percent participation level among youth cohorts in tertiary level education.

Official statistics suggest considerable success in reaching its objectives. Pre-school attendance has risen to very high levels. The share of recent cohorts that make the transition from compulsory to upper secondary education is also nearing universal levels, and the share that enters the tertiary level is inching towards the 50-percent target. Analyses of school transitions and also the PISA data suggest, furthermore, that Sweden is quite successful with respect to diminishing parental social class effects on children's attainment and test performance (Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993; Erikson and Jonsson, 1996; OECD, 2001; 2004). To exemplify, the effect of mothers' education on children's probability of scoring in the bottom reading quartile is lower than in most countries (an odds-ratio of 1.4, compared to 2.0 in the U.S, 2.5 in neighbouring Denmark, and 3.0 in Germany). Sweden's longstanding stress on homogenous school quality appears also to reap positive benefits. The 'school-effect' on children's test scores is very small in comparison to almost all OECD countries (although comparing PISA results for year 2000 and 2003 suggests that it is on the rise).

While gender, school and – to a lesser extent - social class effects are comparatively small in Sweden, differences are quite strong with regard to the immigrant status of children, in particular for children born outside Sweden. To exemplify, the TIMMS studies of 13-year olds shows that Sweden has the highest immigrant gap of all included countries (Woessmann, 2004).

In terms of average test performance in both the first and second PISA study, Sweden positions itself above the middle but at a distance from neighbouring Finland. Considering the huge public investment in education, this may appear as a disappointing result but it suggests at least that the impressive transition rates are not necessarily bought at the expense of lowering standards. Sweden does quite well in terms of securing that few children fall into the lowest test-score level (Level I and below) but, in turn, Sweden is not impressive in terms of the share of youth that fall in the top level. It is especially with regard to math skills that Swedish youth's performance is mediocre.

6.1 Compulsory School, ages 7-16

As the crucial role of pre-school has already been discussed extensively in section 5.1.1, this section will directly move on to the compulsory school level.

Formal school age is 7, although a sizable minority begin at age 6. The comprehensive school that Sweden introduced in the 1960s is now less homogenous than what the PISA results would suggest. With the emergence of free parental school choice, roughly 7 percent of children now attend independent schools. As we saw in Chapter 4 (Fairness in funding) evidence suggests that their clientele is skewed towards the higher social echelons, on one side, and towards immigrant children, on the other hand. One might here speak of a dual ‘opting-out’ and ‘opting in’ trend: parents may choose independent schools in order to flee from immigrant dominated neighbourhood schools, or because they offer special curricula (like Steiner teaching, or Muslim schools, or tuition in Kurdish).

Free school choice in a quasi-market context has also resulted in school competition. The OECD team witnessed several examples of how local schools attempted to develop ‘niche products’. Sunnadals School in Karlskrona, for example, offered two special study programmes, one in English, another on the Montessori model.¹⁶ There are two facets to the evolving differentiation of schools that are likely to affect social selection. As the ‘market’ increases in complexity there is a growing premium on information and local knowledge which will put higher educated and native Swedish parents at a competitive advantage when navigating through the system, a point very much emphasized in Erikson and Jonsson (1996). Additionally, free school choice may entail transportation of children outside the confines of the school district, a cost which families themselves must absorb – again a potential source of social selection.

We identified a third area in which selection mechanisms may indirectly (and quite imperceptibly) come into play. Many local informants emphasized how difficult it is to mobilize the participation and cooperation of immigrant parents, thus making it additionally difficult to design solutions for, and remedy performance problems of, immigrant children. There appear to be two chief explanations of this: one, the often poor command of Swedish among immigrant parents and two, the fact that the primary and lower secondary teaching staff is almost exclusively female. The latter point was strongly emphasized by many teachers we spoke to.

Perhaps most important of all is the learning-friendly and very supportive pedagogical model that Swedish schools have implemented. Via highly individualized teaching methods, children are encouraged to pursue learning at their own pace; teachers will define common targets and will assist the individual child in reaching them. When we add to this that children are not graded until the last year of lower secondary school and that children performing poorly are not required to retake a year, the school environment has undoubtedly created a pervasive sense of *trygghet*, or sense of security, among the children. In fact, the PISA data support this conclusion since Sweden scores among the lowest in terms of children’s expressed math anxiety (notwithstanding that Swedish children clearly do not excel in math *and* notwithstanding the fact that math is one of only three subjects that must be passed in order to access gymnasium directly).

As also the PISA results suggest, the Swedish comprehensive school succeeds quite well, overall, in dealing with disadvantaged and poorly performing children. The ideal is to keep them within the comprehensive school throughout compulsory education (and beyond). There is special educational provision for children with exceptional needs or learning impairments, but its role is very minor;

¹⁶ The OECD team was also struck by the sharp differences in school milieu that we saw, even between two schools (one in Hasselby, the other in Karklskrona) with a similar immigrant over-representation. It became clear to us that the quality and commitment of school leadership becomes all-important in the new and far more competitive school environment.

quantitatively speaking, enrolling less than 3 percent of the total student population. Yet, we identified a few areas where improvement may yield non-trivial positive results.

First, and perhaps most importantly, Swedish instruction for immigrant children seems ineffective. We witnessed this on many levels. In the separate Swedish classes for non-native speakers we found children who had been there for more than one year (and could therefore not pass over to the normal classes). Teachers and officials informed us that such is quite the norm. Also, in a classroom of largely second and even third generation immigrant children we were struck by how poorly they spoke Swedish. The huge delays in learning Swedish means also huge delays in integrating immigrant children into mainstream Swedish education (and society) and contribute, accordingly, to social segregation. Indeed, as we witnessed, it is not uncommon that a school is composed of 70 or 80 percent immigrant children. The slow progress in Swedish that immigrant children make can, in part, be traced to the ambitions of Swedish as a Second Language (SSL) programmes. Beyond merely imparting a command of the language they also insist on teaching a broad menu of topics related to Swedish culture and values. One might, accordingly, contemplate a more intensive crash-course approach to language integration. In part, the problem also lies in heavy residential segregation. And, as Swedish officials affirmed, there appears to exist major problems of attracting and financing enough qualified language teachers, too. We will return to this issue in section 7.2.

Secondly, it is very likely that if pre-school attendance were made *de facto* universal for all children (and immigrant children especially) there would be less need for later remedial intervention and, most likely, children would be more homogeneously prepared from the first day of school onwards.

6.2 Upper secondary education: gymnasium

The gymnasium school is at the edge of Sweden's 'equivalence' policy in education. With the establishment of the comprehensive school, the old and narrowly academic gymnasium gave way to a unitary model that aims to integrate all youth to the maximum. While attendance is not compulsory, in practice the aim is to ensure that all young people do pass from lower secondary and complete an upper-secondary equivalent degree.

To pursue this goal, the gymnasium offers a plethora of options: two main theoretical lines (one science and one social-studies oriented) and 15 more vocationally oriented study lines. The latter span a huge variety, ranging from technical and mechanical subjects through visual arts to hairdressing – in short, something for everybody. This total of 17 tracks (the so-called national line) is complemented by an 'individual line' that serves to incorporate those that failed to pass the entry-level criteria in the 9th grade (in Swedish, English or Math) by offering remedial teaching so as to subsequently qualify youth to enter the mainstream national line.

In order to give a boost to life long learning, minimize stigma, and to prepare youth sufficiently so as to later qualify for tertiary level studies, Swedish policy has sought to narrow the differences between the theoretical and vocational tracks by insisting that a third of the latter's curriculum include theoretical subjects (especially in English, Swedish and math).

The most recent available statistics suggest that there has been important progress towards universalizing upper secondary education. The transition rate from lower secondary is now close to 100 percent. Yet this figure misrepresents reality. For one, about 10 percent of any given cohort enter the 'individual line' and the vast majority of these (80+ percent) do not subsequently transfer into the mainstream gymnasium lines. Secondly, graduation rates are only about 75 percent within the 4-year maximum that the system stipulates. There is, in other words, a substantial drop-out problem that, furthermore, is especially concentrated within

the vocational lines. This raises the question whether substantial drop-out is the price to be paid for the high level of upper secondary vocational education. To an extent, Adult Education succeeds in recapturing a sizable share (about half) of these drop-outs later on. At age 22, upper secondary graduation rates reach 85 percent – internationally speaking an impressive result.

Despite the unitary ideals embedded in the design of the gymnasium there is, in reality, substantial social selection and informal segregation. As both the Swedish country report to the OECD and other research (SOU, 2000) shows, the theoretical academic lines are crowded by higher social strata children while working class and immigrant kids concentrate in the vocational (and individual) lines. Immigrant children are hugely over-represented in the individual line (about 30 percent of all).

Our site visits suggest that segregation may be intensifying on other fronts. There seems, for example, to be a tendency to divide the comprehensive gymnasium into physically separated schools along the vocational-academic divide.¹⁷ And, moreover, interviews suggested that the content of the theoretical curriculum in the vocational lines tends to be of lower standards than in the academic line. To cite one example, the vast majority of students in a mechanical vocational line we visited take only Math A (which is little more than the math levels taught in lower secondary school).

Overall, the OECD team members had divergent impressions about the actual degree of equivalence achieved between different streams within upper secondary education. On the one hand, while it is true that three general core subjects (Swedish, English and Maths) are included into all streams of academic and vocational education, it seems that the level at which these subjects are taught may differ, resulting in a lower de facto value of vocational certificates. On the other hand, the Country Analytical Report (para 48) suggests that the strong emphasis on theoretical subjects in the vocational programmes may be responsible for the relatively high dropout rate from gymnasium. Does this imply that equivalence is a relative concept and that a balance needs to be struck between quality and accessibility of vocational streams ?

6.3 Graduation, transition into tertiary and adult education

In effect, then, the unitary gymnasium school embodies latent social segregation that is empirically illustrated not just by the profile of drop-outs but also by the passage into tertiary studies. Comparatively speaking, higher education enrolment and graduation rates are not spectacular, except with regard to advanced (PhD level) research studies where Sweden (at 2.5 percent) is an international leader. But enrolments and graduation rates in type A (academic line) tertiary studies is below the OECD average, and Sweden lies close to the mean in terms of type B (occupationally oriented) studies (OECD, *Education at a Glance*, 2002). In other words, there is a rather large gap between gymnasium graduation rates and tertiary level participation. Also, available data suggest a persistent pattern of social selection with children of higher social status origins being over-represented in academic studies and especially in prestigious disciplines like medicine (SOU, 2000). One may accordingly hypothesize that the ‘democratization’ of upper secondary education has shifted the main social selection mechanisms upward.

There are, however, two riders to this view. One, an unusually large share of Swedes begin tertiary studies at a relatively advanced age – in part this must be ascribed to the popularity of adult education as a stepping stone into higher education. And, two, as many economists emphasize the monetary returns to higher education in Sweden are extremely modest (Björklund et.al., 2004). It is likely that stronger incentives would help increase enrolment rates.

¹⁷ School officials stressed that this was mainly motivated by the need to diminish school size. Nonetheless, the *de facto* result is to undo in part the principle of universalism and integration.

As noted above, adult education plays a key role in providing a second chance to students who were unable to complete gymnasium, as well as supplementing credits for admission into tertiary education. According to statistics of the Ministry, in 2004, no less than 28% of all young people admitted into tertiary education had passed through Komvux or Liberal adult education: ¼ of this group had actually completed gymnasium but supplemented their grades in Komvux in order to enter tertiary education; the others managed to obtain their upper secondary diploma in adult education. The 'second chance' role of Komvux and Liberal adult education has been strengthened thanks to the 'Adult Education Initiative', one of the national government's earmarked programmes which aimed to reduce the rate of unqualified school leaving and to boost lifelong learning. This Adult Education Initiative has now come to an end, and observers fear that the earmarked budget will – as usually - be merged with the general transfer to the municipalities, which may mean that investments in second chance education will be pursued to different degrees, depending on municipal priorities.

6.4 Conclusion - issues for debate

On many fronts, Sweden's efforts to democratize education in terms of access and opportunities are very impressive, particularly with regard to its comprehensive system of educational bridges and second-chance options. While many countries are struggling with wide quality gaps between academic and vocational lines, Sweden appears to have made significant progress in achieving the 'equivalence' principle between the two streams. One cannot, of course, help but wonder whether statistics tell the whole story. A sceptic would argue that much of what presents itself as equality is, in reality, a relabeling of old bottles. The gymnasium is a case in point, not only because the trend seems to favour a re-segregation between the vocational and academic lines, but also because the menu of vocational education stretches over a wide range of stronger and weaker options. Against the sceptic one would, however, argue that the emphasis on a minimum of theoretical content in the vocational lines ensures an adequate academic level. Hard data are lacking but the question boils down to whether the theoretical classes in the vocational line are *de facto* 'gymnasium level'.

The egalitarian and inclusive results are importantly influenced by the system of adult education as a second-chance opportunity for those who either drop out or fail to attain sufficient points in order to access tertiary studies. The OECD team discussed intensely whether herein lies a 'moral hazard' in the sense that many choose to abandon secondary school since, later, they will be able to recover the equivalent (while receiving financial support to do so). Informants both within the Ministry and in the school system were generally sceptical about this interpretation, but did not rule it out. In any case, contemplated reforms will end the experimental Adult Education Initiative. Without questioning the importance of second chance provision, the OECD team felt that more pressure should be put on completing gymnasium as the first chance in the future. There are several options in implementing such a strategy: raising the quality of education, raising the length of compulsory education, and/or developing alternative routes to success within gymnasium (such as a fully-fledged apprenticeship programme linking formal schooling with on-the-job training). The first and third of the proposed reforms indeed coincide with concrete intentions of the Swedish government, to be implemented as from July 1st, 2006. At the same time, adult education should continue to play its role of second chance provision for those who still drop out.

On a number of counts the OECD team did identify issues where further reforms might yield non-trivial egalitarian improvements. Firstly, Swedish instruction for immigrant children (and parents) seems far too slow and ineffective and contributes to segregation within and probably also between schools. We will return to this issue in the next chapter. Secondly, as all local experts affirmed, the individual line within the gymnasium appears to fail in terms of its stated objectives. The rate of passage into the 'national' line is extraordinarily low, suggesting that it concerns youth that is either very little motivated or very difficult to teach. Remedial programmes, like the individual line, may never prove very effective and, hence, the focus

returns to earlier learning and stimulus. This provides a further argument in favour of the development of alternative programmes such as apprenticeship.

And here, to conclude, we arrive at a major question that the OECD team was unable to fully examine, let alone answer. The question we asked ourselves continuously is whether the Swedish educational system has an in-built tension between its stress on *trygghet* and social integration, on one side, and the quality of learning, on the other side. To be true, the PISA studies do not suggest any major quality problems but, again, one may also interpret the PISA data such that, given the effort, one would have expected superior student performance – particularly in math. There are several dimensions to the ‘quality’ dimension. One, we were struck by the rather narrow emphasis on three subjects, English, Swedish and math, in terms of evaluating students’ abilities and transitions to higher levels. Two, a recurrent theme during our visit was the perception that teachers and schools expect and demand too little of the children. Apropos this, one of the principal explanations of Finland’s superior PISA performance lies in strong expectations and demands on students. Does the Swedish school motivate its students too little? This is a question we are not equipped to answer and it lies, anyhow, a bit outside the scope of our mission. Yet, if it has, directly or indirectly, equity implications it must be addressed. There is some evidence that Swedish schools demand too little of students. Skolverket’s (2004/545) survey of upper secondary students shows that a substantial minority feel that there are too few demands on them to perform. Very surprisingly, this response is especially frequent among immigrant children. May it be that teachers inadvertently lower their expectations and demands when they deal with immigrant children?

7. ETHNIC MINORITIES IN SWEDISH EDUCATION

The huge immigration waves of the past decades constitute a major challenge to equity in the Swedish education system. Since 1960, the share of the foreign-born population has grown from 4 to 12%. Many others are born in Sweden from foreign-born parents. Out of 9 million inhabitants, an estimated 1.8 million (20%) were born outside Sweden or have at least one foreign-born parent. Despite enormous efforts, the Swedish education system has –quite understandably - not succeeded in fully absorbing this inflow. One indicator of the gap between immigrants and Swedes is their relative risk of referral to the ‘individual programme’ at upper secondary level: this risk is 5.2% among native Swedish pupils, 8.5% among the Swedish-born with a foreign background and 21.4% among the foreign-born immigrants. As a result, 35% of all students in the individual programme have a foreign background. Naturally, immigrants are also strongly over-represented among the 70,000 youngsters aged 16-24 who are neither in education nor in the labour market. Further, in the age group 25-29, 7.8% of the Swedish individuals have not completed lower secondary education, as against 14.9% of those with foreign-born parents and 27.9% of those born abroad (Statistical Annex to the Country Analytical Report). Sweden also scores comparatively poorly as regards the performance gap between native and foreign pupils in TIMSS and PISA.

The problems are multiple: unequal resources of the immigrant communities (the socio-economic gap), conflicting views on language policy in education, lack of qualified teachers, and segregation:

- the *socio-economic gap*: the Country Analytical Report points at enormous unemployment problems among immigrant parents: the unemployment rate of parents is 30% among foreign-born students, and 16% among Swedish students with a foreign background;

- the *language gap*: as mentioned in the Country Analytical Report, pupils with a foreign background in Anglophone immigration countries generally perform better because many of them have English as their mother tongue. In Sweden, 82% of the students with a foreign background do not speak Swedish at home;
- the *teacher gap*: there is a general shortage of qualified teachers in Sweden. For example, a survey in 2005 showed that 30% of the teachers in grades 7-9 had no teacher diploma. The problem seems to be particularly acute as regards teachers of Swedish as a second language (SSL – in initial education) and Swedish for immigrants (SFI – in adult education);
- the *housing gap*: housing segregation has hampered integration and contributed to segregated schooling. This problem has already been discussed extensively in Chapter 4.

Apart from immigration, Sweden also has to cater to small ‘national minorities’ such as the 15-20,000 Sami and an estimated 25,000 Roma. In what follows, we will focus mainly on the language issue, as the other points have already been discussed in the previous chapters.

7.1 Bilingual education

Swedish legislation guarantees (a) mother tongue assistance at pre-school, (b) mother tongue instruction at compulsory school, and (c) study guidance for those who need support, to all children who do not speak Swedish at home. Admittedly, this legislation is extremely progressive – few other countries would afford the same level of ambition. However, in a special report on language tuition (Skolverket, 2003/790) the NAE sketches the gap between legal commitments and current practice, and formulates proposals for a new impetus. The figures speak for themselves:

- 10 years ago, 60% of all ‘multilingual children’ at pre-school received mother tongue assistance. Today, this figure has declined to 13% at present;
- the decline at compulsory school has been less severe: from 60 to 50%.

Apparently, the situation has deteriorated most at the *pre-school level*, where mother tongue assistance is presumably most effective in raising children’s cognitive skills and preparing them for regular school. One can suspect that the lack of mother tongue assistance discourages multilingual families from enrolling their children for pre-school, so there is an indirect negative effect as well. Moreover, statistics of the NAE show that the number of ‘open pre-schools’ is declining too. Unfortunately, we could not find any statistics on pre-school enrolment rates broken down by ethnic background or mother tongue. According to the NAE’s statistical yearbook, approx. 14% of the children participating in pre-school do not speak Swedish at home; 1.9% receive mother tongue assistance. As regards the Sami population, the glaring shortage of pre-school provision seems to be a very contentious issue. Given the key role of pre-school in improving the starting position of children at compulsory school, and scientific evidence confirming that mother tongue tuition improves later achievement of migrant children, the NAE concludes that opportunities are currently being missed to prevent problems at later ages. What is worse, the situation has seriously deteriorated over the past decade, which suggests that the educational careers of today’s 5 year old immigrant children are more at risk than those of their predecessors.

Within the compulsory school and gymnasium, the situation looks better, although associations of ethnic minorities complain – together with the NAE – about half-hearted policy-making. Not only has provision of mother tongue *instruction* (which means systematic instruction of the language) lost ground in quantitative terms; it is also organized after school hours, which is seen as stigmatizing and discourages

participation. Moreover, mother tongue instruction could in principle include tuition of other subjects in the students' mother tongue. Efforts in this field have almost completely dwindled in recent years – except in reception classes and in some segregated private schools. Further, the NAE points to the paradox that mother tongue instruction is nearly non-existent in special education or assimilated programmes, where immigrant children are strongly over-represented. Materials are hard to find – and mostly imported from the countries of origin.

Tuition of other subjects in the mother tongue appears to be subject to controversy in Sweden. Apart from the NAE, we met strong supporters among some representatives of ethnic associations and, particularly, at the municipal office of education at Södertälje. This municipality is militating for genuine bilingual education and committed itself to substantial investments. The representatives that we met called for further rigorous evaluation, which would indeed be useful for the whole country. Others - professionals as well as researchers – were somewhat more skeptical: they pointed to the high cost of bilingual education and challenged the legal obligation of the state to organize it. Some of them also pointed to the sheer absence of any teacher training in this field. While others claimed there is a need for individual pathways, with a gradual transition from mother tongue to Swedish tuition.

All in all, it seems as if the underlying problem mainly boils down to a matter of resources. Can the right to mother tongue tuition be reasonably guaranteed to all, if more than 100 languages are being spoken in Sweden? At present, 60 of these languages are actually being taught in the context of mother tongue instruction, probably at an insufficient level of quality. Maybe more emphasis should be put on genuine bilingual education for some of the more numerous minorities in urban centres, while other scarce resources should be spent on improving Swedish tuition. However, the NAE insists that both options should not be seen in opposition to each other: better Swedish tuition will be facilitated if mother tongue instruction (including instruction of other subjects in the mother tongue) is reinforced. The Agency refers to strong evidence from international as well as Swedish research showing that young people exposed to regular mother tongue instruction (i) develop a better sense of identity, (ii) perform better at school, (iii) constitute a bridge for integration between their ethnic community and the mainstream environment (Ovando et al., 2003; Thomas & Collier, 1997; Hyltenstam & Tuomela, 1996 - as summarised in Skolverket, 2003/790, p.9-13).

Part of the resource problem could be solved if (assistant) teachers could be recruited more actively from the ethnic communities themselves. As we saw in section 5.2.3, the Stockholm Institute of Education has built in (ethnic) diversity as a key criterion into its recruitment policy. Another example of good practice relates to Nytorpsskolan, South of Stockholm, where links have been forged between Roma families and the local school through the recruitment of Roma teachers in the staff. A special Roma class offers a bilingual (and intercultural) curriculum with courses being taught in Romani in the morning and in Swedish in the afternoon. Course contents have also been adapted to the culture and life experience of the Roma children: for instance, examples relating to horse-raising are being used in maths classes; traditional embroidery handicrafts are being taught to girls. By liaising with parents, the Roma teachers have succeeded to reduce dropout to zero.

7.2 Swedish as a second language (SSL) and Swedish for immigrants (SFI)

A well-developed policy regarding SSL and SFI may be regarded as a complement – not substitute - to mother tongue tuition. Actually, difficulties in this area are also growing, due to the explosive increase in the numbers of immigrants. One of our interviewees testified that, 20 years ago, it was possible to learn Swedish in six months, whereas now it takes two years. He attributed this evolution to the declining teacher / pupil ratio and to the rising share of immigrants in the population. In ethnically segregated schools, tuition of Swedish is getting more and more difficult due to 'negative' peer group effects (few

native speakers among the fellow-students). Moreover, representatives of ethnic associations, the students' union as well as professionals from adult education referred to the poor quality of SSL and SFI tuition. Courses are generally considered too schoolish and detached from real life; and the proportion of unqualified teachers allegedly is much higher in this field than in other subjects.

SSL should therefore be one of the priorities in the ongoing Quality Programme. As regards SFI, it sounds paradoxical that liberal adult education is not allowed to organize SFI courses: for one, liberal adult education reaches many people from ethnic minorities; and two, its methods of instruction are known for being more holistic and integrated.

As for SSL, the poor quality and low status of SFI courses seem to be attributable to a large extent to the lack of qualified teachers. There are around 1600 SFI teachers in Sweden and only 110 have the appropriate qualifications for what they are teaching. Most of them are primary school teachers with no additional skills, although the Ministry has recently organised in-service training in which around 1000 teachers have participated.

Furthermore, only one model of SFI course currently appears to be in use. A reform of the SFI syllabi is being prepared, with more emphasis on language acquisition than on Swedish society issues, and with more flexible options depending on the needs of participants (e.g. work-related versus everyday language).

7.3 Education initiative for highly segregated areas

The education initiative for highly segregated areas, launched by the national government, is obviously an important step forward. Many millions are being invested in the recruitment of additional teachers, in improved teacher training and didactical methods, but also in networking between schools and local communities. In section 5.2.2, we saw nice examples of good practice where ethnic communities in Sweden are actively participating in steering educational projects, and at the same time benefiting from the schools' services. It seems to us that the concept of community schools deserves to be spread more widely across Sweden.

7.4 Conclusion – issues for debate

Growing ethnic inequalities are probably the Achilles heel of the present-day Swedish education system. The upward shock in immigration, which probably means a most valuable asset in the long run, has given rise to serious problems in the short run. While we concentrated on language issues in this chapter, the range of problems relating to immigration is obviously much wider: it comprises socio-economic inequalities, segregation, cultural barriers, xenophobia and discrimination etc. A comprehensive educational priority programme for immigrants is needed to tackle the problem in its various dimensions.

Our suggestions build on the general concept of integration policy. To begin with, in many European countries, integration is increasingly seen as a process that involves rights and duties. There is growing support for the idea that the right to settle in a host country is linked to a (joint) commitment to invest in cultural introduction and language learning. For adults, this may involve an obligation to participate in SFI as well as citizenship courses, and for parents, the commitment to bring their children to pre-school where they are obviously more exposed to the language and values of the host country, thus guaranteeing a better start at school.

Of course, such regulations can only be imposed in Sweden if provision of mother tongue assistance at pre-school, SSL and SFI is adequate. Mother tongue assistance and instruction need to be seen as investments yielding a return, rather than just a burden. Moreover, language tuition is just one (albeit important)

dimension of educational provision for newcomers. And education in turn is just one dimension of cultural and socio-economic integration, which involves a lot of other efforts *on both sides*.

Sticking to the educational dimension, there is a need to develop a more integrated concept of language acquisition, which is linked with a range of needs and aspirations of immigrants. For some highly self-reliant newcomers, an intensive and efficient language course can be sufficient to bridge the gap; others will prefer a long-term language course combined with vocational education in a 'dual track'; young parents may be extremely motivated to invest in a course that is linked with the acquisition of parenting skills. In some countries, highly successful 'two-generation' services have been developed, involving tailor-made simultaneous education for parents and children. Similarly, for school children, SSL should help them integrating in the neighbourhood, youth and sports clubs, etc. Mixed courses may be more effective than schoolish SSL courses.

The OECD team also felt that the immigrant communities can be better involved as human and social resources for their children. This applies to intercultural education as well as mother tongue tuition, where the glaring shortage of teachers and materials are currently boosting failure rates. Investing in the recruitment and training of teachers with a foreign background is one way of valorising the resources of ethnic communities; but there are many other ways, as we learned from the example of Fryshuset.

Last but not least, there is a glaring shortage of qualified teachers for SSL and SFI courses. Current investments in in-service training of teachers will need to be sustained in order to improve the quality of language teaching as well as the relevance of the courses on offer for a diversity of needs and target groups. At the same time, syllabi will need to be diversified and the effectiveness of teaching methods will need to be carefully monitored.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PISA studies as well as other international research (Erikson and Jonsson, 1996) have repeatedly demonstrated that Sweden belongs to the world leaders as regards equality of educational opportunities. Few other countries can boast similar degrees of social mobility combined with equality in society at large. And yet equality is not, in this case, the result of a bureaucratic straightjacket imposed from above. The Swedish model rather builds upon a strong social consensus about the conception of equity in society and in education in particular. Equality is not just strived for in terms of *opportunities*, as meritocrats would define it; as defined on the first page of the Country Analytical Report, it is *equivalence in outcomes* that matters. The ultimate goal is not that everybody complete higher education, nor that curricula and qualifications be identical for all, but (a) that the distribution of outcomes be uncorrelated with individuals' social origin, (b) that diplomas of the same level have equal value, and (c) that every citizen, at any level of qualification, have the possibility to further upgrade their skills.

In concrete terms, the tools to achieve equity have not been added as corrections to the education system – they are at the heart of the Swedish model:

- a strong, popular and successful pre-school combining care, nurture and education;
- a well-designed, broad and attractive comprehensive curriculum,

- an encouraging, and non-threatening learning culture for all,
- opportunities for bridges and second chance provision at all levels,
- absence of dead ends,
- equivalence of qualifications, and
- a long-standing tradition of democratic adult education.

And yet, the Swedish education system has come under serious pressure in the past decades. To begin with, the economic crisis of the early 1990s has necessitated structural adjustments in order to reduce its high cost. *Decentralisation and competition* have contributed to greater efficiency; moreover, they have made the system more responsive to local demand. At the same time, however, inequalities between municipalities and social groups have increased, while segregation has become more problematic, particularly in the larger urban centres.

It would make no sense to return to the old centralised model. In our view, two important options are worthy of consideration:

firstly, it must be feasible to reconcile the advantages of free school choice with the strong egalitarian values, by defining more clearly the *rights of the users* and the obligations of schools. For example, to the extent that education is seen as a basic right linked to human dignity, it is preferable to ban achievement-based admission criteria in upper secondary education – or to generalise them to all schools in a uniform way. The ongoing reflection about non-discrimination in education (other than tertiary education) should take on board this issue as a priority. Further, guidance and support in relation to school choice (including free transportation) can help equalise the opportunities of the less informed and mobile groups.

- secondly, equality of opportunity across the country now depends (too) crucially on a nationwide consensus between central and local education authorities. The evaluations carried out by the NAE in recent years suggest that it may be preferable for the national government to maintain some authority over funding mechanisms, either through a minimal degree of earmarked budgeting, or through central regulation of local expenditures. Further, national institutions such as the National Agency for Education and the National Agency for School Improvement may receive more authority and impact on local education policy.

Another major exogenous shock affecting the Swedish education system has been the massive *immigration*, propelling the country into the era of multiculturalism and globalisation. Obviously, education policies have not yet been able to absorb this shock, to the point that the opportunities of the upcoming generation of immigrant children have rather deteriorated during the last decade: mother tongue assistance and instruction, considered by many professionals as the best foundation for educational success, appear to be dwindling. Swedish as a second language and Swedish for immigrants are generally of insufficient quality, due to a severe shortage of qualified teachers, and to inadequate course materials and methods. Ethnic segregation is rising. Of course, education alone cannot guarantee the integration of immigrants – but it must be admitted that great efforts are urgently needed to restore the balance. A national debate about the link between citizenship and education is needed:

- can Sweden be more demanding towards immigrants, for example, in terms of participation in SFI and pre-school?

- Should mother tongue assistance and instruction (including tuition of other subjects in the mother tongue) be guaranteed to all? To what extent is this desirable, and feasible?
- How can language instruction be made more effective and relevant?
- What can be done to engage the human and social resources of immigrant communities for education?

The third key issue identified by the OECD team relates to the relatively *high dropout rate* from upper secondary school. To a considerable extent, this is remedied by the flexibility of Komvux, which supplements the starting qualification of approximately half of the early school leavers. All stakeholders seem to agree that more efforts are required in initial education, beginning with pre-school, to prevent early school-leaving:

- given the preventive effects of *early childhood* education, would the Swedish public opinion support the idea of mandatory participation at an earlier age? Alternatively, can stronger incentives be created to encourage participation, beginning with (more) free pre-school provision – and if so, for whom?
- is it possible to reduce school failure at the end of compulsory school by a closer *monitoring of pupils' achievement* during the early years of compulsory school?
- how can the *individual programme* be made more effective? The present programme obviously fails to achieve its objectives, as the majority of participants eventually leave gymnasium unqualified rather than transferring into the national curriculum. Some argue in favour of a *more demanding attitude* towards pupils; others advocate the upgrading of the individual programme to a *full-time programme*.
- The ongoing preparation of an alternative curriculum in the form of a fully-fledged *apprenticeship programme* seems to us a natural option (though probably not the only one).
- Is the time ripe for an *extension of (part-time or full-time) compulsory education* – up to age 19, or until an upper secondary qualification has been achieved?

Whereas the assignment of the OECD team was to make a critical assessment of Swedish achievements in the field of equity, we certainly want to express our appreciation to the Swedish authorities for the lessons that outsiders can learn from their impressive experience. We are also very grateful to the team that prepared the Country Analytical Report and the country visit, as well as all parties who made our visit so enriching.

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ANNEX 1: NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE, BACKGROUND REPORT AUTHORS, COORDINATION

Sweden National Coordinator

Hans-Åke Öström, Secretariat for International Affairs, Ministry of Education

Background Report Author

Per Båvner, Unit of Policy Analysis, Ministry of Education

National Steering Committee

Hans-Åke Öström, project leader, Secretariat for International Affairs, Ministry of Education

Per Båvner, responsible for the CAR, Unit of Policy Analysis, Ministry of Education

Bodil Bergman, Secretariat for International Affairs, Ministry of Education

Tom Nilstierna, Unit of Policy Analysis, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Eva-Lotta Johansson, Division for Immigrant Integration and Diversity, Ministry of Justice

Eva Löfbom, Ministry of Finance

ANNEX 2: OECD REVIEW TEAM

Mr. Ides Nicaise (Rapporteur)	Professor and Research Manager at Higher Institute for Labour Studies (HIVA), University of Leuven, Belgium
Mr. Gosta Esping-Andersen	Professor of political and social sciences, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona.
Ms. Pat Tunstall	Independent consultant and Visiting Fellow, Institute of Education, University of London.
Ms. Beatriz Pont	Education and Training Policy Division, Directorate for Education (EDU), OECD, Paris, France

ANNEX 3: PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT

SWEDEN, 1–10 FEBRUARY, 2005

Tuesday 1 February - Stockholm

9.30 *Meeting with the Steering Committee:*

Steering Committee

Hans-Åke Öström, project leader, Secretariat for International Affairs, Ministry of Education
Per Båvner, responsible for the CAR, Unit of Policy Analysis, Ministry of Education
Bodil Bergman, Secretariat for International Affairs, Ministry of Education
Tom Nilstierna, Unit of Policy Analysis, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs
Eva-Lotta Johansson, Division for Immigrant Integration and Diversity, Ministry of Justice
Eva Löfbom, Ministry of Finance

11.00 *Presentation of the Swedish educational system and the equity issue by officials from the Ministry of Education:*

Representatives

Johanna Fryksmark, the Division for Student Financial Support and Adult Learning
Lars-Olof Mikaelsson, the Division for Schools
Frédérique Lémery, the Division for Higher Education
Sten Ljungdahl, the Division for Upper Secondary Education

13.30 *Meeting with Minister for Schools, Ibrahim Baylan*

14.00 *Further discussion with Ministry of Education officials; and the State Secretary, Agneta Karlsson (responsible for pre-schools and adult secondary education) to get political perspective.*

Wednesday 2 February - Stockholm

9.00 *Meeting with Authorities at the Ministry for Education and Visit at Hässelbygårdsskolan*

From the National Agency for Education¹⁸

Kerstin Mattsson, Head of Department, Strategy and Planning
Silja Jundin, Director of Education, Strategy and Planning
Anna Barklund, Director of Education, Strategy and Planning
Birgit Skjönberg, Director of Education, Inspection
National Agency for School Improvement¹⁹:

¹⁸ National Agency for Education is the central administrative authority for the Swedish public school system for children, young people and adults, as well as for preschool activities and child care for school children. The role of the National Agency for Education in the Swedish education system is to define goals in order to administrate, to inform in order to influence and to review in order to improve.

Kristina Wester, Head of Department

From the Swedish Integration Board

Maria Ressaissi, integration in primary and secondary school.

Adèle Ennab, SFI and integration in adult secondary school

13.00 *Visit at Hässelbygårdsskolan, typical primary and lower secondary school in Stockholm.*

Meeting with:

Principal, Bo Strömwal

Representatives of the teachers

Parents

Students

Municipality representatives

Thursday 3 February - Karlskrona

9.00 *Karlskrona. The County Government Board. A visit at Blekinge Institute of Technology*

Representatives

Lars Haikula, Vice-Chancellor

Ingegerd Wärnersson, County Governor, former Minister of Schools

13.00 *Visit at Hässelbygårdsskolan, and meeting with the principle, Bo Strömwal, and representatives of the teachers, the municipality, the parents, and the students*

14.00 *Meeting with representatives of the county and municipality at the County Government Board about integration, adult education, and motivation*

Representatives

Cecilia Höglund, responsible for integration, Municipality of Karlskrona

Kaj Eriksson, principle for adult secondary education, Municipality of Karlskrona

Ingrid Augustinsson-Swennergren, responsible for welfare issues, Municipality of Karlskrona

Magnus Johansson, chair of child and youth board, Municipality of Karlskrona

Friday 4 February - Karlskrona

Visits to lower and higher secondary schools in Karlskrona

Representatives

Magnus Johansson, Chair of Child and Youth Board, Municipality of Karlskrona

Ingrid Augustinsson-Swennergren, Responsible for Welfare Issues, Municipality of Karlskrona

Anja Eklund, Head of Development, Municipality of Karlskrona

Göran Palmér, Head of Education, Municipality of Karlskrona

¹⁹ National Agency for School Improvement: Is responsible for general support to schools within nationally prioritised areas. Supports local development of work quality and improvement of learning environments. Stimulates the development of professional competence among educators. Is responsible for the national programme for school leader education. Supports the widened use of ICT in education. Disseminates knowledge, experiences and research among professional educators. Participates in national and international networks that stimulate school improvement

9.00 *Visit at Sunnadalskolan, a primary and lower secondary school*
Resrepresentatives
Principal Ulla Ståhl and representatives for teachers, students, and parents

14.00 *Visit at Törnströmska gymnasiet, upper secondary*
Resrepresentatives
Principal Karl-Erik Olsson and representatives for teachers, students

Monday 7 February - Södertälje

10.00 *Meeting with representatives for the municipality at the office of education to discuss equity in education*

12.45 *Visit at Ronnaskolan, a primary and lower secondary school with a high concentration of immigrants especially from Turkey*
Resrepresentatives
Principal and representatives of the teachers, the students and parents

14.00 *Visit at Ekenbergsska Gymnasiet, an upper secondary school*
Resrepresentatives
Principal and representatives of the teachers and the students

15.30 *Meeting with representatives for the municipality for remaining questions and conclusions*

Tuesday 8 February - Järfälla kommun, in Stockholm region

Moderator: Annika Ramsell, Principal for the Adult Education at Järfälla kommun

9.00 *Coffee and introduction of Järfälla kommun*
Representative
Annette Nylund, President of the Board of Education, and member of the Executive Committee of the Government of Järfälla kommun as well as member of the local Parliament

9.15 *Board of Education at Järfälla kommun*
Resrepresentative
Kerstin Ekenberg, Director of the Board of Education at Järfälla kommun

9.30 *National goals for adult education in Sweden*
Resrepresentative
Annika Ramsell, Principal for the Adult Education at Järfälla kommun, or Sune Stjärnlöf, Program director for Education at Järfälla kommun

10.15 *Student Guidance Office and Validation (CVG)*
Resrepresentative
Annika Ramsell, Principal for the Adult Education at Järfälla kommun, and Maja Jansson ,
Temporarily Head of the Student Guidance Office and Validation (CVH) at Järfälla kommun

12.00 – 13.00 Lunch at Järfälla Public School for Restaurant Education, Host: Lotta Håkansson-Harju, Mayor of Järfälla kommun

Wednesday 9 February - Stockholm

Meetings with Researchers, Authorities and NGOs at the National Agency for Higher Education

9.00 *Meetings at the Ministry of Education*

Representatives

Robert Erikson (Professor at Stockholm University)

Mats Björnsson (Ministry of Education, unit of policy analysis)

Nihad Bunar (Lecturer at Södertörns högskola (University College))

11.00 *Meeting with representatives from The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions*

13.00 *Meeting with the National Council of Adult Education*

Representative

Britten Månsson-Wallin

13.30 *Meeting with the National Council of Adult Education²⁰*

Representative

Kitimbwa Sabuni

14.00 *Meeting with the Sami Parliament*

Representative

Mikael Teilus

14.30 *Meeting with representatives of roma people*

Representatives

Angelina Dimiter Taikon, principal and teacher at class at Nytorpsskolan

Mikael Demetri

Gregor Dufunia Tanmateos

16.00 *Visit to Fryshuset: Projects for marginalized youth*

Thursday 10 February - Stockholm

9.30 *Presentation of the preliminary conclusions by the OECD review team*

Representatives

Hans-Åke Öström, project leader, Secretariat for International Affairs, Ministry of Education

²⁰ The National Council of Adult Education is entrusted by the government and parliament to distribute grants to the study associations and folk high schools, submit budget and fiscal reports, follow up and evaluate the popular education activities, and administer the Popular Education Net, a digital platform for learning and conferences.

Per Båvner, responsible for the CAR, Unit of Policy Analysis, Ministry of Education
Bodil Bergman, Secretariat for International Affairs, Ministry of Education
Eva-Lotta Johansson, Division for Immigrant Integration and Diversity, Ministry of Justice
Eva Löfbom, Ministry of Finance
Lars-Olof Mikaelsson, the Division for Schools
Sten Ljungdahl, the Division for Upper Secondary Education

11.00

Presentation to the State Secretary, Johnny Nilsson (responsible for compulsory and upper secondary school)