

EDUCATION POLITICS AND TEACHERS: SWEDEN AND SOME COMPARISONS WITH GREAT BRITAIN

LISBETH LUNDAHL

Introduction

Teachers are always central factors in education policy. However their roles vary depending on how educational matters are decided and managed. Furthermore, teachers' power and control over their working conditions and teaching may vary in different education systems. Up until the 1980s, Swedish teachers at primary and secondary levels were supposed to act as loyal civil servants in a strongly centralised and regulated education system. State directives were regarded as necessary to guarantee uniform schooling regardless of gender, socio-economic, cultural and geographic background of the students. From the 1980s and onwards, this picture has changed. Education and governance of education have undergone a rather dramatic transformation, which highly affects the work and position of teachers. Today teachers are supposed to be responsible, autonomous professionals, not only teaching and promoting the development of young people but also actively participating in the development of the school and education as such. Not only have the majority of detailed regulations disappeared but the resources — funding and time — to manage the many new assignments and cope with the increasingly heterogenous groups of students have also diminished.

The aim of this report is firstly to compare and contrast two forms of welfare states, i.e. Sweden and Great Britain, and their patterns of educational restructuring and secondly to discuss their possible consequences for teachers' work and professional status. The focus is on the Swedish case as this is the country and system that is best known to me. I want to compare it to the British, or perhaps more correctly the English, case in order to highlight both similarities and profound differences between the two European countries.

The analysis is based on studies of education policy and teacher work in Europe, Sweden and Great Britain. One of these is the OECD project *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (2002-2004), another *Education Governance, Social Integration and Exclusion in Europe* (EGSIE, 1998-2001), funded by the European Union. Sweden and Great Britain were included in both. Moreover, I refer to scientific work analysing and comparing Swedish and British welfare and education (e.g. Kallós & Lindblad 1994, Whitty et. al. 1998, Hudson & Lidström 2002).

In the following section I discuss different international patterns of welfare states and education policy as a basis for the presentation of the Swedish case and the comparison with British conditions.

Patterns of Welfare and Education Politics

Education simultaneously serves crucial economic functions and constitutes a cornerstone of the welfare state apparatus by fostering the individual to become a citizen and giving him/her a certain security within the labour market. The concrete realisation of these functions and the balance between them however vary between times and from country to country. Here I will suggest that it is possible to group the education policies of different countries in a way closely related to the categorisations of welfare states and paradigms of social exclusion and inclusion suggested by several sociologists. Furthermore I assume that different clusters of national education policies constitute and partly result in different working conditions for teachers.

Welfare Regimes

The Nordic countries, including Sweden, have traditionally been regarded as typical representatives of the social democratic welfare-state regimes. These are characterised by universalism where the welfare policies are not only targeting the most needy, but include the whole population, high-level economic transfers and social insurance. This welfare-state model presupposes full employment and a high degree of social solidarity. In contrast, the liberal welfare-state regimes, typically represented by the USA, Great Britain and Australia, are characterised by means-tested assistance, modest economic transfers and social insurance. Individual responsibility and market solutions frame this welfare-state model. Finally, the conservative regimes, e.g. France, Austria, Italy and Germany, traditionally accept a strong welfare-state, but preserve status differentials. Church and the family are central institutions, and unlike the social democratic regimes, the State only interferes when the family is no longer able to take care of its members (Esping-Andersen 1996a).

Silver's (1994) paradigms of social exclusion, resting on different assumptions of politics and with different implications for political action and governance, are closely related to Esping-Andersen's categorisation of welfare regimes. In the monopoly paradigm, prevalent in social democratic welfare regimes, collective political action is considered essential to protect the interests of socio-economically and culturally dominated groups and as a tool to counteract social exclusion and segregation. The specialisation paradigm, dominant in liberal welfare regimes, means that the State and politics should interfere as little as possible with individual freedom and responsibility, and if anything promote them. Finally the solidarity paradigm, emanating from the French context, has group solidarity and moral integration as important components. A summary of central characteristics of the two regimes/paradigms of special interest here, the social democratic/monopoly and the liberal/specialisation, is presented in table 1.

Esping-Andersen's categories of welfare states and Silver's paradigm of social exclusion are retrospective — they summarise traits of earlier welfare policies. One may ask if they are still useful in the 21st century or whether they preserve obsolete ideas and ideals. In recent years sociologists have investigated whether it is still sensible to talk about e.g. a specific Scandinavian welfare model of the kind outlined here, considering the globalisation and

TABLE 1. PARADIGMS OF WELFARE POLICIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION/EXCLUSION

social democratic/monopoly paradigm	liberal/specialist paradigm
strength and relative autonomy of politics in relation to the economy/market	strength of market/economy in relation to politics
collective solutions	emphasis on individual freedom and responsibility
emphasis on co-operation	emphasis on competition
high levels of taxation and economic transfers	lower taxation levels and economic transfers
universalistic welfare policies	welfare policies targeting those who need it most
policies to ensure low degree of differentiation and social exclusion	social differentiation and exclusion is less counteracted by political means

Source: Esping-Andersen 1996a, Silver 1994

neo-liberalism characterising even the Nordic countries during the last decades. It may thus seem as if Sweden no longer serves as a good example of the social democratic welfare states, and has moved in the direction of a liberal welfare regime. More generally this would fit well with a hypothesis of welfare regime convergence (Esping-Andersen 1996, Kautto et al 2001). In their study of social and gender policies of the Nordic countries, Kautto et al (2001) however conclude that a distinct “Nordic model” in welfare or living conditions still seems to exist. Comparing the welfare policies in the EU countries, Vogel et al (2003) come to similar conclusions.

Education Policy Paradigms

I will argue that different welfare regimes frame and influence the general direction of education politics in different ways. Some underlying dimensions may be distinguished: differences concerning the instrumentality of education, the value base of education, and the initiation of educational change. The first dimension concerns the functions of education: socio-cultural and economic instrumentality respectively. The second dimension is about the degree of equality and comprehensiveness in education on the one side and differentiation and élitism on the other. In the social democratic/monopoly paradigm there is thus a strong emphasis is on equality, fairness and public education. Comprehensive education with little streaming and tracking tend to be favoured. Schools and education stand relatively free in relation to the economy, even if education definitely also serves economic functions. Ideas of competition and achievement are prominent in the liberal/specialisation paradigm, and the links to the economy and market are more prominent. Different forms of education — public and private — and early streaming and tracking with considerable space for choice exist (c.f. Hudson and Lidström 2004). A third dimension concerns the sources or agency for educational change. Archer (1985) distinguishes between politically initiated education changes, internal initiation, i.e. change initiated by educational personnel, and external transactions where groups outside education put new demands on schools. While political manipulation is much more important than the other forms in the centralised system, the three have roughly the same importance in decentralised systems.

Departing from Esping-Anderson (1996b), Silver (1994), Archer (1985) and Hudson & Lidström (2002), I distinguish between two kinds of education policy paradigms (table 2). They serve as a basis for the empirical comparison and discussion in the following section.

TABLE 2. EDUCATION POLICY PARADIGMS

	social democratic education policy regime	liberal/specialist education policy regime
value basis of education	comprehensive values	market values élite/differentiation
instrumentality of education	stronger emphasis on social/cultural functions	stronger emphasis on economic functions
initiation of education change	the central State and politics plays a crucial role	initiation by political, internal and external actors

Swedish Education and Educational Policy

I begin with a brief presentation of the Swedish education system and the ideas and realisation of Swedish education politics, mainly from 1975 to the present time. I assume that the essentials of British education and education policy are more well-known to international educational researchers, and therefore I will not make a similar presentation in this case.

The Swedish education system

The Swedish education system is briefly outlined in Appendix A. The extensive public pre-school education and child-care for children aged 1-5 constitutes the first distinctive part of this system. All children whose parents are working or studying are entitled to pre-school. If the compulsory pre-school classes for 6-year olds are included, appr. 3/4 of all Swedish children (1-6 years) attend some kind of child-care or pre-school education. Almost two thirds (64 %) of all school children aged 7 — 9 go to public after school centres, mostly located in the schools. Pre-school and school age child-care are mainly tax-funded, but parents pay fees up to a certain limit.

The 9-year compulsory comprehensive school with little streaming and tracking is another distinctive feature. Similar ambitions of comprehensiveness characterise upper-secondary school, which include vocational and academic programmes in the same organisation. Both kinds of programmes provide basic eligibility for higher education. Almost all (98%) continue to upper secondary school. All education at primary and secondary levels is free of charge. Thus, a very high percentage of children and young people aged 1-19 go to child-care, pre-school class, primary or secondary education. Moreover there is a well-established system of adult education, further extended through a reform in the 1990s. However, the percentage of young people continuing to higher education is somewhat lower than in several other Western European countries — approximately 45%. The establishment of independent schools, i.e. non-municipal but tax-funded education, was fuelled by generous funding after a Parliamentary decision in 1994. Even if the number of such schools is steadily increasing, the majority (94%) of compulsory schools, as well as upper-secondary schools (90 %) are still run by the municipalities (National Agency of Education 2004).

A radical transformation of Swedish education and education politics

The big post-war reforms of Swedish primary and secondary education in the 1960s and 70s were largely characterised by strivings for equality and uniformity. Schools should be of high and equal standards, and young people should have equal opportunities to continue to higher education, regardless of social or geographical background. Therefore the introduction of the 9-year comprehensive school in 1962, and reform of upper-secondary school in 1969/70 were framed by strong and detailed State governance. Schools and teaching were regulated and controlled through national curricula and syllabi, through a variety of specifically destined State subsidies and a vast number of other regulations concerning resources, organisation, staff and daily work.

In the 1970s, Sweden entered a period of economic and political instability after 25 years of continuous growth and steady social democratic rule. From now on Social Democratic and Non-socialist governments alternated, with different constellations of Non-socialist parties in office in 1976-1982, and in 1991-94. The public welfare system was challenged, both by the economical and structural changes, and by attacks from the political right and left. The responses to those challenges gradually shifted from a strategy of welfare state employment expansion to a strategy of deregulation and reduction of the public welfare apparatus (Esping Andersen 1996b). If a 'social investment strategy' was adopted in the 1970s, characterised by active labour market policy, education and training reforms, and efforts to attain gender equality, a new approach was embarked in the 1980s. Now "de-politisation", "marketisation" and decentralisation were introduced. Local authorities and schools were given increased local responsibilities and freedom to find methods and ways to reach the centrally formulated education goals. A shift from management by rules to management by objectives took place. A new national curriculum guide of the comprehensive compulsory school, leaving considerable freedom to schools and municipalities to develop their education was thus introduced in 1980. A reform of State subsidies to local developmental work and in-service training followed in 1982, and in 1989 decisions were taken on a more clear-cut division of labor between the state and local levels, and on a transfer of teacher employment responsibility from the State to the municipalities (Lundahl 2002a, 2004, 2005).

In the 1990s a new set of reforms was introduced, shifting the balance between the State and the local level even further. The non-socialist parties in office 1991-94 took more far-reaching steps toward local autonomy than the Social Democrats had done previously, and, with a commonly used phrase, made efforts to break the State school monopoly. Now the establishment of independent schools was actively promoted and vouchers and possibilities to invite tenders in certain subjects were introduced. Also the decision in 1993 to deliver all State subsidies as lump sums to the municipalities was to become crucial to the development of education. Both socialist and non-socialist governments contributed to the development described above, but with partly different motives. The Social Democrats regarded decentralisation and deregulation as means of modernising education and reaching goals of equality and quality when the former strategies failed. In their view political agency was still crucial, but local authorities should be engaged to a higher extent than before. Furthermore parents and pupils should be able to exert more influence. For the Non-socialist parties, and particularly the Conservatives, the changes have been part of a wider strategy, with a clear aim to reduce the power of politics in favour of schools, parents and different private interests (Lundahl,

2002a, 2004, 2005).

To sum up, the old centralised system of governance in Sweden was abandoned to a large extent in the 1980s and 1990s. Changes of education were increasingly initiated, planned and implemented at the local level. Earlier the central political agency was the motor of educational change. Today the central State is certainly still an important source of action and change, but local actors — politicians, school administrators, headmasters, teachers, parents, and others are able to influence what is going on in schools to a much higher extent than before. Choice and market mechanisms have been introduced, and the State has relinquished with practically all its earlier economic steering tools vis-à-vis the municipalities. The means of education governance before 1980 and in the beginning of the 2000s illustrates the development during the last 25 years (Appendix B).

The Restructuring of Education Politics

In this section I make a brief comparison between Swedish and British education politics during the last three decades in respect to the dominant values and functions (instrumentality) and the sources of change initiation (c.f. table 2). Needless to say, such a description and analysis refers only to broad tendencies. Already the use of “British” is problematic (not least to a foreign writer), and in reality much of what is said about British education policy rather refers to English conditions (c.f. Ross & Hutchings 2003).

The value basis of education

The basic line in Swedish education policy has been and still is to provide equal education of high quality to its citizens, regardless of background. The extensive system of pre-school institutions is seen as a crucial means of social inclusion and individual development. The principle of comprehensive education at compulsory and post-compulsory secondary level has been upheld from the 1960s and onwards. Disabled children and children with special needs are integrated in normal classes to a very high extent. The idea of life-long learning is embodied in extensive possibilities for public adult education, giving persons with limited or incomplete education a second chance. The construction of upper secondary programmes providing eligibility to studies at universities and university colleges, a system of government study loans and an even geographical distribution of higher education guarantee high accessibility for all. Even if provision of knowledge is a catchword both of the political right and the Social Democrats today, ideas of promoting excellence have never been voiced as strongly and firmly in Sweden as in e.g. the U.S. and Great Britain. It is thus symptomatic that the Swedish government’s description of its education policy gives prominence to three main objectives: A school for all, The democratic school and Lifelong learning (Ministry of Education and Science 2002, p. 10).

Notwithstanding such objectives of inclusion and comprehensiveness, a wave of market thinking and new public management was very prominent in Sweden from the 1980s and in particular in the 1990s. Ideas of increased efficiency, competition and choice, transparency and accountability have thus been central when delegating responsibilities to schools and municipalities at a time of substantial budget cuts. Here as in Great Britain, the ideal of the

self-governing, responsible and flexible individual was generally embraced. It is worth noting that contemporary Swedish compulsory schools enjoy more autonomy in using resources (money, teaching time, teachers) and choosing working methods than in most other OECD countries (OECD 2002).

Traditionally, the British system has had a much stronger element of differentiation and élitism than its Swedish counterpart. The prevailing dual system with streaming and selection thus constitutes an important difference in comparison to Sweden. Under the Thatcher era this thinking and ideology of excellence were also realised in an elaborated system of assessment and testing, evaluation and ranking. This system has not been seriously altered under the Labour government, since their return to power in 1997 (Hudson & Lidström 2002, Jones 2003).

New Labour's first major legislation — the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act — accordingly took as its starting point the inviolability of much Conservative law-making. It retained testing, league tables, the national curriculum and local management of schools (Jones 2003, p. 158).

From the early 1980s, education became one of the most prominent arenas for the neo-liberal restructuring of the British society. Many of the concrete expressions of the market ideology were later imported to Swedish education policy, particularly during the period of Non-socialist coalition government in 1991-1994. However the Swedish version appears as rather “light” in comparison (c.f. Lundahl 1990, Kallós & Lindblad 1994, Hudson & Lidström 2002). *Market policies for education seem to have been easier to develop and accept in a society with élitist traditions (Hudson & Lidström 2002, p. 56).* For example, the demands on schools to act competitively in an education market, the accountability thinking and the privatisation strivings have been much stronger and more profound in Great Britain. An education service industry has emerged in Britain, as private companies are taking over a wide range of services such as the running of schools, teacher recruitment and career guidance. In Sweden, as was mentioned above, a vast majority of Swedish pre-schools and schools are still public. Supplementary services such as school cafeterias, cleaning and certain expert support are increasingly privatised, and a limited private sponsoring has been introduced in some schools. However, the major part of Swedish education is still “pure public” services, and the share of “free market” services is only marginal (Lundahl 2005. Also c.f. Fredriksson 2004). Furthermore evaluation of education has a stronger link to the market in Great Britain than in Sweden, e.g. through the privatisation of school inspections and the mechanism whereby failing schools can be closed and new schools opened.

Instrumentality of education

It would be a mistake to describe modern Swedish education policy as only or mostly focused on social welfare and democratic objectives. Actually, a combination of economic growth and welfare strivings has been a crucial feature of Swedish social democratic policies in general, and this is also true for the education ideology which dominated Swedish education policy for a considerable part of the post-war period. Good elementary education and equal access to secondary and higher education were regarded both as a matter of social justice, and an important precondition for economic growth and prosperity, necessary for further welfare

TABLE 3. INITIATION OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE IN SWEDEN

Period and initiation	Political	Internal (professionals and their organisations)	External (industry, organisations, interest groups, parents)
1960s — early 1980s	clearly dominant (State)	marginal	social partners to a certain extent ¹
late 1980s —	still important (also local political bodies)	teacher unions teachers	Employers: Swedish Association of Local Authorities, local employers (municipalities) parents, other interest groups, industry

reforms. The decision on the 9-year comprehensive compulsory school in 1962 and the reform of upper-secondary education in 1969 which collected all vocational and academic programmes under the same organisational umbrella were both based on such welfare-and-growth thinking. The reform of upper-secondary education in the 1990s, extending all 2-year vocational programmes with a third year, and the big investment in adult education during the same period had similar motives. The continuity of this broad strategy (i.e. all citizens should have a solid education in order to promote individual as well as economic growth) in Swedish education policy is thus striking. Therefore the fact that the economic functions of education have been more and more pronounced in the last decades does not mean a radical shift of perspective. I would argue that strivings of this kind in Great Britain, from the Ruskin college speech in 1976 and onwards, to make education more aligned with the needs of the labour market (e.g. the many efforts to reform VET and other post-16 education) actually represents more of a break with earlier policies than in the Swedish case.

Initiation of educational change

As mentioned before, a rather dramatic shift of responsibilities from State level to a number of actors at several levels has taken place in Swedish education during the last decades. As Whitty et al (1998) have correctly underlined, the decentralisation process in Sweden however clearly differed from that in many other countries in its emphasis on the municipalities. Power, to a higher degree than elsewhere, was transferred to the local political authorities (c.f. Appendix B). But, as has been pointed out before, even schools, head-teachers and teachers received far more responsibilities and autonomy to reach the educational objectives than before. At least formally, the influence of pupils and parents in everyday decision-making in schools increased. The distribution of power to initiate educational change during different periods of time according to Archer's (1984) categorisation is summarised in table 3.

In Great Britain the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) and the introduction of a State controlled National Curriculum meant a radical transformation and redistribution of power. Jones (2003) concludes:

¹ The traditionally well organised social partners — in particular the Swedish Employers Association (*Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen, SAF*) and the Swedish Association of Trade Unions (*Landsorganisationen, LO*) have been important actors in Swedish education policy, in particular in regards to vocational education and training, but also concerning education more generally (Lundahl 1997).

The ensemble of measures instigated by the ERA, combining national direction and local managerial initiative (---) provided a means for the dismantling of the regime — the system of relationships and cultural patterns — established in the years after 1944, and for the creation, in some depth, of a new educational order (Jones 2003, p.135).

The local educational authorities (LEAs) lost much of their former power to the central government and to schools through the introduction of local management of schools. Schools also received the option to opt out of LEA control and become grant maintained schools, directly funded by the State. Other measures were taken in the 1990s meant that the position of LEAs was further weakened, in particular its economic powers. The Swedish and British cases display similarities as well as differences. In both countries, political governance has been deployed to political, professional and, private instances. Schools and head-masters have received extended responsibilities and influence. One difference between the two countries is very clear: While a series of decisions in Great Britain aimed at dismantling LEAs, by devolving power to the State or through privatization, the Swedish decentralisation process largely meant a transfer of power to the local political level. Another difference concerns the influence of teachers. This will be discussed in the following section.

The Impact on Teachers' Work and Professional Status

In this concluding section, I discuss how teachers' work and working conditions are framed and affected in the Swedish education policy context and make some comparisons with the corresponding British situation. I limit my discussion to teachers in compulsory schools run by the municipalities (independent schools are still rather few). As was previously underlined, all comparisons must be very tentative, as my knowledge of the British context is limited.

Teacher work in Swedish compulsory school — some notes

Since 1977, all Swedish teacher education is included in a comprehensive system of higher education (universities and university colleges). During 2000 an extensive reform to modernise teacher education was passed by the Swedish Parliament in order. Among other things, the reform meant that 1,5 years of study is common for all students, regardless of later specialisation, and eight of the earlier eleven teaching degrees were replaced by one common degree. Also the research basis for teacher education was to become stronger. Basically, a teaching degree is required to find employment as a teacher, but in cases of teacher shortage, non-certified teachers may be employed, normally for shorter periods of time.² Approximately 85% of all teachers in the 9-year comprehensive school have a teaching degree.

Teachers in the first six years of the 9-year compulsory school teach several subjects ("class teachers"), and in forms seven to nine, they are specialised in a few subjects ("subject

² According to the Education Act, local authorities may employ persons without a teaching degree on indefinite term contracts *only if there are no applicants with a teaching degree, special reasons exist and the applicant has equivalent qualifications associated with the post and appears to be suited for the task* (Ministry of Education and Science 2003, p. 34).

teachers”). A majority (68%) of all teachers at pre-school, primary and secondary levels are women — in forms 1-7 approximately 84%. Since 1990, teachers and head-teachers are employed by the municipalities. Their working conditions are framed by central agreements between the local authorities’ employer organisation and the central teachers’ union associations. On this basis, local collective agreements are reached in each municipality between the local authority and the local teacher unions. As a result, teachers’ working conditions (salaries, work assignments, et cetera) may vary considerably between different municipalities. Furthermore, promoting the development of and the recruitment to the teaching profession is primarily a responsibility of the social partners — the municipalities (employers) and the teachers’ unions. Hence, the central 5-year school improvement agreements from 1995 and onwards have focused on development and change, and highlighted the importance of teachers accepting an extended professional role and responsibility of their own development as well as that of the school. This view has been highly compatible with that of the Government. Actually, some of the 1996 Central Agreement formulations were imported verbatim into the 1997 development plan of the Government (Lundahl 2000). The new teacher role is characteristically described in the official Swedish report to the OECD project *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*:

A broader teacher’s mandate. For teachers, working in an objective-oriented and decentralized school system is very different from working in a centralized school system. Consequently, teachers have a new and broader mandate. The recent school reforms are based on the principle that teaching staff should have the opportunity and be obliged to develop their own teaching activities. This management model is sometimes called participatory management by objectives. It is the professionals, i.e. the staff, who are to agree on how to achieve the objectives. In other words, the professionals are now more directly responsible for the educational design and innovation. Basically, the task of teachers has been extended to include matters such as practical achievement of the national objectives, local curriculum work, local evaluation and organization of their own learning processes. The fact that they have local responsibility means that the staff have greater scope for organizing the knowledge process at the local level, and therefore have more responsibility for pupil’s knowledge assimilation (Ministry of Education and Science 2003, p. 29).

Several recent studies among teachers indicate that a vast majority of them appreciate their job, in particular teaching and the contact with pupils. However, in a survey by the largest teacher union (Swedish Teachers’ Union)³ among 50.000 of its members, almost 60 percent of the teachers report their working situation as unsatisfactory with little power over working conditions. Above all, lack of resources and many new duties contribute to a heavier workload (Swedish Teachers’ Union 2002). Similarly, the teachers interviewed in the research project Education Governance, Social Integration and Exclusion in Europe (EGSIE), expressed frustration over difficulties to reach educational objectives with diminishing resources. They argued that the local budget tended to get a priority over national curriculum goals. While politicians and senior officials emphasised the freedom and responsibilities of professional teachers to promote learning and growth, the teachers voiced a loss of autonomy and power,

³ The largest member groups are pre-school teachers, teachers in compulsory and upper-secondary school and recreation leaders employed in school-age care.

in particular over the working hours outside the classroom (Lindblad et. al. 2002).

Education Policies Framing and Targeting Teacher Work and Recruitment of Teachers: Final Discussion

The value basis: A tradition of collaboration and agreements

When describing and discussing measures to attract, recruit and retain teachers, the Swedish background report differs quite significantly from e.g. the British in at least one aspect. To a uniquely high degree, such measures are based on discussions and agreements between two or three parties: the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALA), the two big teacher unions (the Swedish Teachers' Union, the National Swedish Federation of Teachers) and, in many but not all cases, the State/Government. This is the classical "Swedish model" where wages and working conditions are agreed upon by the parties of the labour market rather than by state legislation. The previously mentioned central school improvement agreements constitute an important example of how work issues related to teachers are solved. Another example is the declaration of intent in 1998 signed by the Government, SALA, the two big teacher unions and the Swedish Association of School Headmasters and Directors of Education on joint efforts to promote recruitment to and development of the teaching profession. *The Attractive School* project (2002-2005), aiming at making schools attractive workplaces, is a similar expression of co-operation between the social partners and the State. As a consequence, state interventions targeting teachers and teachers' work are rather few in comparison to Britain of the 1990s and early 2000s. Salaries, promotion and career structures, and teacher appraisal systems are matters which largely are regulated by the State in Great Britain today, whereas they are regulated at the labour market in Sweden (Ross & Hutchings 2003). However, the National Agreement in 2003, *Raising Standards and Tackling Workload: A National Agreement* between the English and Welsh Governments, the National Employers' Association and all except one of the teachers' unions illustrates a corporatist strategy similar to that in Sweden. In Sweden, the recent reform of initial teacher education, different measures to develop school leadership, and a decision of targeted funding to the municipalities to increase the density of teachers are examples of governmental actions directly addressing teachers and school leaders (Ministry of Education and Science 2003).

Undoubtedly, neo-liberal ideology and the techniques of new public management have affected the working conditions of teachers to a high extent both in Great Britain and Sweden. I argue that they have done so in somewhat different ways. In particular in England and Wales, the systems of evaluation and appraisal are more directly achievement and result-oriented. The consequences for schools and teachers of a failure are far more dramatic than in Sweden, where you for instance do not close down a school on the basis of a negative evaluation. On the other hand contemporary Swedish teachers work under another kind of difficulty, namely rapidly adapting to a very dramatic shift in education governance and still maintaining important features of the old policy paradigm. Teachers are supposed to make their teaching as flexible and individually directed as possible in order that all pupils attain the educational objectives. At the same time the goal of equal education is strongly stressed in the Education Act. The demands on comprehensiveness and co-operation, and giving support to pupils with special needs are strongly emphasised, but so are the demands on raising academic achieve-

ment, competition and school specialisation.

Initiation of educational change — division of power and responsibilities

The distribution of power and responsibilities is the aspect of the education policy paradigm with the most obvious and direct implications for teacher work. In both Britain and Sweden, redistribution has taken place since 1975. Above all the position of the LEAs has been dramatically weakened in the British case. By introducing a National Curriculum and through a system of testing and quality assessment the Government now has a much firmer grip of the curriculum. Simultaneously, a number of actors are supposed to act according to a market logic: autonomous schools competing over parents, pupils and teachers, and increased influence from industry and other stakeholders. In Sweden the process has partly been the reversed, since a comparatively large share of responsibilities have been delegated to the local authorities, perhaps most importantly the economic decisions. But similar to Britain, the autonomy and responsibility of schools to raise their standards has been strongly emphasised in Sweden in the last three decades. In both cases parents are supposed to take a more active part in everyday decisions, and have much more freedom to choose education for their children than before. Being a professional teacher has been redefined and extended to include far more assignments. In Sweden, teachers allegedly have more freedom of action to choose methods, the self-governing, committed entrepreneur being a model. But teachers' work is also intensified and subject to effectivisation strivings and financial cuts. In Britain, the 1988 Reform Act stands out as a point of refraction. The ERA meant that the teachers' unions were weakened and that teachers were increasingly monitored. As a result, much of their former autonomy and strategic capacity to initiate and shape curriculum was lost. After 1988, a system of actors and structures, e.g. the national curriculum, the inspection system, systems of ranking and accountability, line managers and heads, has significantly reduced teachers' educational initiative (Jones 2003, Lawn 1996).

In both countries, a large number of the teachers perceive the workload as too high. In the big survey cited above, more than half of the Swedish teachers reported that the many new assignments, a clear intensification of work (c.f. Hargreaves 1994) contributed to an unsatisfactory working situation with little power, rather than increased professional autonomy.

Instrumentality of education

It is more difficult to judge extent to which teachers and their working conditions have been affected when education has become considerably closer linked to the needs of economy. In Sweden, the most obvious change has taken place at tertiary level, even if international exchange and competition have been central features of higher education and research for a long time. Today, universities co-operate with industry to a much higher extent than was the case ten or twenty years ago. As stressed above, Swedish teachers at primary and secondary levels have a long record of working within a broad education strategy, encompassing socio-cultural aspects as well as economic growth (human capital) motives. Paradoxically, the links to economy at upper-secondary level have been weakened during the last decade, as the preferences of young people rather than the labour market demands are decisive when schools offer different programs. In contrast, the dimensioning of different kinds of upper secondary

programs was based on labor market prognoses until the early 1990s. Obviously, two different kinds of relationship between education and economy come in conflict here: one aiming at closer connections between education and national economy, the other subordinating education under a market or business logic, and redefining it from a public to a competitive private good (Ball 1998).

Finally, the professional legitimacy of teachers in both countries may be jeopardised, when schools increasingly are expected to serve economic interests and act on an educational marketplace. For example, it was recently demonstrated in a Swedish doctoral thesis that schools that are exposed to competition tend to grade their pupils higher than other schools, without correspondingly higher academic achievements. (Wikström 2005). One may ask, when such tendencies of marketisation begin to seriously damage the credibility of teachers as professionals.

DEPARTMENT OF CHILD AND YOUTH EDUCATION, SPECIAL EDUCATION AND COUNSELLING
UMEÅ UNIVERSITY, SWEDEN

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APPENDIX A. THE SWEDISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

	Age	Years of study
Doctoral studies		
Undergraduate and graduate studies		
Upper secondary school	18 16	12 10
Compulsory school	15	9
School age childcare	7	1
Pre-school class	6	
Pre-school	1-5	

Source: Ministry of Education and Science 2003, p.21.

APPENDIX B.

MEANS OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL IN SWEDEN (-1980-2003)

Means of control	Before 1980	2003
Education Act, other school legislation	Detailed	Considerably less detailed
National curriculum guide and syllabi	Governing by objectives and methodological guidelines	Governing by objectives
National time schedules (appendix of the Act of Education)	Detailed regulation of the number of teaching hours for every school year	Regulation of total number of teaching hours in each subject-/group of subjects in compulsory school. Experiment on school-managed time distribution
National marking system, national tests	Marks were given every year (1-9).	Marks in forms 8 and 9, national tests in forms 5 and 9. Achievements are made public
Allocation of resources	Detailed regulation by the State	The municipalities
Employer responsibilities	Mainly the State	The municipalities
Regulation of teacher salaries, teaching duties, other working conditions	Agreements between the State and the central teacher union organisations	Agreements between the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and teacher union organisations, local agreements
Initial teacher education	The State	The State
In-service education, further education of teachers	The State	The municipalities
Inspections of schools	The State	The State
Quality reports, quality audits	---	The State (end of the 1990s)