

# Changing teacher education in Sweden

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## Introduction

Despite attempts through official policy over the past forty years and up to the end of the first decade of the new millennium to ‘unite’ teacher education and provide a teacher education programme for all teachers with a common core of professional scientific knowledge (see e.g. SOU 1999:63 and Swedish Government Bill 1999/2000:XX), as in many other countries teacher education in Sweden today is still currently subjectively structured in accordance with a vertically and horizontally differentiated school system that gives rise to different teacher educational traditions and different ways of perceiving what characterizes the teachers’ mission and professional expertise (Beach, 1995; Eriksson, 2009). Moreover, recent developments are reinstating this distinction in formal policy (Ahlström, 2008; Kallós, 2009; Beach, 2011; Beach & Bagley, 2012). The present paper discusses these issues based on data from three separate ethnographic studies of teacher education in a series of policy ethnographic investigation across three decades of policy making in Swedish teacher education over the past twenty five years (see e.g. Beach, 1995, 1997, 2000; Eriksson, 2009; Player Koro, in press a, b, c, Beach & Koro, 2012).

## Background

There is a distinction within teacher education in Sweden today that derives from the historical roots of teacher education (see also Jedemark, 2006; Åstrand, 2006) as partly in a seminar tradition, focusing on practical aspects of teaching directed to teaching of younger children, and partly in an academic tradition focusing on subject studies and directed toward the teaching of adolescents. Bernstein (1990, 2000) has suggested that these historical distinctions are international.

The two traditions have had very different contents. The seminar tradition has been based on a practice-oriented model for professional knowledge and a school teaching content related subject knowledge curriculum that generally consisted of the same literature that the prospective teachers could use in their future teaching. It was aimed at the teaching of younger children and historically also children from low social-economic backgrounds in the so-called *folkskolan*. The academic tradition on the other hand emphasised formal subject

(disciplinary) knowledge for teaching older children, mostly from the middle and upper-middle classes in the so-called realskolan and läroverk institutions. Knowledge of teaching as a professional practice was regarded as scientifically unproblematic in this tradition and treated more as a personal orientation (ibid).

Over the past fifty years there has been a series of policies; what we call a policy trajectory (after Ball, 1997); that has been at least in part designed for and committed toward eliminating the above distinction by creating preconditions for a common fond of scientifically grounded professional knowledge of teaching as practice for communication in teacher education to all prospective teachers, regardless of their age-range or subject specialisations (SOU 1999:63; Beach, 1995, 2000, 2011). The present paper addresses some key aspects of this policy trajectory based on ethnographic research in three different time periods and in different teacher education institutions.

### **Research projects and methods**

We term the research approach we have adopted as policy ethnographic. In Beach (1995, p. 7) and following Ball and Bowe (1989) this kind of research was termed policy ethnography and described as follows as:

concerned both with exploring policy making in terms of the processes of value dispute and material influence which underlie and invest the formation of policy discourses and portraying and analysing the processes of active meaning making which relate policy texts to practice (including) the identification of resistance, accommodation, subterfuge and conformity... and the plotting of matches and mismatches between contending discourses in these arenas... Thus, policy ethnography rests on a distinction between intended and actual policy or policy in use and will attend closely to the processes of mediation or recontextualisation.

This concept of policy ethnography has coloured each of the individual research projects (see e.g. Beach, 1995; Eriksson, 2009; Player-Koro, in production, a, b, c). Analysing the processes of active meaning making in teacher education that relate policy texts to practice and locating matches and mismatches between contending discourses has been central aspect as has an effort identify possible distinctions between intended policy and policy in use over the decades with respect to the processes of mediation or recontextualisation. In the present paper we have focused in particular upon policy into practice issues such as what is expressed

as characteristic for *professional knowledge and the professional role*, what *knowledge needs* do teachers have and does *an image of an ideal teacher* exist and if so what characterises this teacher (see also Sjöberg, 2011) as expressed by student teachers and in formal policy over the 25 years of the research. The outcome from this analysis has then been used to interrogate to me recent policy changes and their motivations from the present government.

The research we have carried out has in standard ethnographic fashion employed long-term participant observation and analysis (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004). Ethnographic data from our three ethnographic projects has been used (Beach, 1995; Eriksson, 2009). Both prospective primary (i.e. school-years 1-6) and secondary (school-years 7-9) teachers have been included, and each project has involved one or more years of field research complimented by extensive individual and group, formal and informal interviews. Over thirty teacher educators and several hundred student teachers have been involved.

Each project has looked at one of two particular cycles of reform comprising respectively a Commission of Inquiry with a Green Paper text conveying the recommendations of the commission and a Government White Paper (a Government Bill) and an Act of Parliament based on those recommendations. The first originated in with the 1974 Teacher Education Investigation called LUT 74 the second was initiated by the Teacher Education Committee from 1997 (LUK 97). However, five reform cycles have been considered in the background to these ethnographic parts of the paper. This is in order to provide a fuller description of an implied policy trajectory and to show what is happening to this trajectory in the most recent round of reform initiated in 2007. The five reform cycles are comprised respectively by the Green and White Paper productions from the 1946 School Commission's *Teacher College Delegation*, the 1960 *Teacher Education Expert Committee*, the 1974 *Teacher Education Investigation* (LUT 74), the 1997 *Teacher Education Committee* (LUK 97) and most recently the HUT 2007 Commission on a *Sustainable Teacher Education*.

## **The key policies**

### *The Teacher College Delegation*

The Teacher College Delegation (TCD) was established under the National School Commission in 1946 to examine the then status, possibilities and requirements for a more scientifically grounded teacher education programme. Two main intentions were expressed. One was to help break the previously bifurcated holding on professional knowledge from the seminarium and academic traditions and the other was to develop a scientifically grounded professional knowledge base for the teaching profession (Beach, 2011). Courses in

pedagogical and psychological content areas were introduced to these ends to improve common understandings of the purpose of schooling and to support cooperation between different teacher categories as a foundation for the implementation of school development projects in the context of on-going educational reforms. According to the TCD these required new dimensions in teacher competence for a more progressive school.

Teacher education was linked very distinctly and explicitly through both the directives from the Government to the TCD and recommendations from the enquiry commission to national educational politics and school development (also Rosengren & Öhngren, 1997). As part of this one proposal of the TCD was that research closer to teacher education delivery should be established through setting up full research professorships in new teacher training institutions called Teacher Colleges, as part of an intention to develop and communicate a more applied (praxis focussed) research that was more relevant to teachers' work than other more abstract forms of psychological research might be. This new praxis based research should mainly involve scientific investigations of general pedagogical questions the delegation suggested but it also pointed to the value of a full scientific study of teaching method and an intention to develop content-related analytical skills (Beach, 2011). This was expressed as extremely useful for many teachers. As is discussed later in the paper it seems to have been very difficult to fulfil these intentions in practice (see also Beach, 1995, 2000; Gran, 1995; Eriksson, 2009).

#### *1960 Teacher Education Expert Committee*

The 1960 Teacher Education Expert Committee (TEEC 60) followed up the development of teacher education after the establishment of the Teacher Colleges and the hoped for grounding of a scientific professional knowledge base for teachers' professional knowledge as described above. It submitted its recommendations for teacher education in 1965 (SOU 1965:29) and as the TCD had done it emphasised the need and value of scientific psychological and pedagogical content for professional knowledge for a more reflective teaching practice. However, the recommendations of the TEEC also noted that further efforts were needed in order to form a unified basis of scientific knowledge for teacher education to support this professional reflection. In practice it said, training procedures were still divided. Moreover, it also noted that in its present form the content of pedagogical and educational/learning was dominated by psychological research at the expense of other potentially valuable disciplines such as the sociology, philosophy and history of education and that the content presented was often too abstract toward and far-removed from teaching as praxis (Beach, 1995).

To solve this problem a new teacher education subject was recommended. This subject was called teacher methodology (metodik) and through it the intention was that a scientific interconnection between theory and practice should be developed. The key fields were the teaching process and its objectives, conditions and results and the subject was to be taught as a compliment to subject studies and study units on philosophical, sociological and historical knowledge of education practices, interactions and systems (Eriksson, 2009). TCD research recommendations for strengthening the professional knowledge base were also reaffirmed within two directions: one for general pedagogical research and one for research related directly to refining teaching methods. The developments outlined were to be accomplished within existing faculty and disciplinary structures.

#### *LUT 74: Teachers for a school in transition*

Nine years after the TEEC report a new commission was appointed, LUT 74 (SOU 1978:86), this time with the task of re-examining teacher education objectives, structure and content for a school in transition (Askling, 2006). The commission's recommendations were published in November 1978 and formed the basis of Government Bill 1984/85: 122 for a unified teacher education with the same basic goals for the training of all teachers for the comprehensive school. This training should replace the previous class and subject teacher education and the aim was once again to get away from the dualism that these programmes rested on.

In the recommendations from the commission in SOU 1978:86 the subject of teacher methodology, which since the enactment of the TEEC 60 recommendations had borne the main responsibility for ensuring the scientific foundation of theory and practice, was to be replaced by a component called didactics (Sw: didaktik). This new subject corresponded roughly with advanced curriculum studies (approx subject and/or general methods and pedagogy) in Anglo-Saxon teacher education traditions and will henceforth be referred to as curriculum theory in the paper. It thus had a general and a subject specific element and a general element and was considered to contribute to fuller scientific connections in the professional (praxis) knowledge area. However, LUT also added a critical dimension. This was that although one view of the function of research in society is that research must be highly specialized and oriented toward technological and economic progress and that schools should teach research-based-knowledge of this kind, another position is that research is also a natural part of professional activities like teaching with its own value for and in that profession (Beach, 2011).

On these grounds the LUT commissioners recommended that training in systematic analysis and in developing constructive criticism of prevailing societal and professional conditions should become part of teacher education (Beach, 1995; Fransson & Lundgren, 2003; Eriksson, 2009). LUT wrote about stimulating a meaningful research-career-connection in this vein and added that this is valuable in that much of the work carried out by teacher professionals also has a research character through the systematic recording, monitoring and analysis of observations (Beach, 2011). Most of the recommendations from LUT 74 were halted after a change in government in the mid-seventies.

The new right-centre coalition government meant that the detail steering implied by LUT was not necessary and it kept the three tier system of teacher education (infant-primary, primary-middle, secondary/subject) that LUT wanted to abandon. It did however, in line with LUT recommendations, pass a bill to incorporate teacher education into the university and university college system in 1978. In the bill it gave a charge to the universities and colleges to develop the scientific knowledge base of teacher education. The recommendations of LUT 74 informed several changes to teacher education brought about through the 1984/85 Teacher Education Reform Act in 1988. This was after the return to power of the Social Democratic Labour Party in 1982 (Beach, 1995).

#### *The 1997 Teacher Education Committee (LUK 97)*

The teacher education inquiry committee called LUK 97 was appointed by the Government in conjunction with a series of reforms in the school sector that were felt to place new requirements on teacher competence and teacher education, and it was LUK's responsibility to outline the objectives and principles for this education and to make suggestions about its content and scope and to create a stronger link between teacher education and the education sector in the now decentralised and municipally run schools (Fransson & Lundgren, 2003). The recommendation in LUK was to strengthen the school based part of teacher education to these ends and broaden the general professional knowledge base and competence of each teacher through curriculum theory and cross-disciplinary thematic subject studies. However the LUK members went further than the directives they had been given. They also recommended the establishment of a new research field, educational sciences. As written in Beach (2011, 209) LUK:

Concentrated some of their energy on changes in the funding procedures for academic research in the country (and) recommended the establishment of the new research

area... as a better means than existing faculty structures and research disciplines to provide direction and scope to the research needs of teacher education (Askling, 2006)... LUK pointed out that the measures previously introduced to realise a teacher education research based knowledge had been unsuccessful, and they strongly criticized pedagogical research within the universities for this... They wrote (that) although pedagogical research had dominated research for teaching as praxis and teacher education for many years, it had not developed a research base that served teachers' needs or even produced sufficient PhDs to fill lecturer posts in the nation's teacher education programmes (Fransson & Lundgren, 2003). Both of these things had been intentions expressed in the Higher Education Reform Act in 1977, when teacher education formally became part of the higher education sector.

LUK's critique was also taken up in the subsequent Government Bill for *A Renewed Teacher Education* (Government Bill 1999/2000: 135). However, the Government did not endorse LUK's proposal to set up a new research area (Fransson & Lundgren, 2003; Askling, 2006). Instead, it suggested that a special Education Science Committee (Utbildningsvetenskaplig kommitté: UVK) should be formed within a new organization for research funding called *Vetenskapsrådet* (VR/ the Swedish Research Council: Government Bill 2000/01: 3) with the task to promote the development of educational research and research training by economically supporting high quality research in close proximity to teacher education and directly relevant to teachers' professional needs (Beach, 2011). This cycle of reform thus added somewhat of a new twist to the policy trajectory for a unified professional knowledge based on the scientific study of teaching as praxis from the TCD onwards. This twist was provided by the creation of a new field of research and subsequently a new university subject; education science (Beach, 2011).

#### *A Sustainable Teacher Education: HUT 07 A forward or backward step?*

Some common features can be identified in terms of teacher development in relation to the policy texts that have been discussed so far. These are:

1. That facts and principles derived from systematic theoretical and empirical disciplinary investigation and analysis (scientific knowledge) of formal education are valuable if not essential components of professional knowledge for teachers

2. That this knowledge should be taught by research competent and aware staff in formal university based teacher education and is essential for good professional development and the smooth running and effectiveness of schools in the interests of all pupils and broader society
3. That there has been an ambition to create a unified teaching profession with a common knowledge base related to educational work

Similar identifications to these have also been made about teacher education internationally by among others Bernstein (1990, 2000), Apple (2001), Darling-Hammond (2006), Gore et al (2004), Lee (2011) and Zeichner (2010) (see also Beach and Bagley, 2012). They concern the development of an education for teachers as institutional communicators who can conduct research, develop new knowledge and take an active role in school development in collaboration with colleagues, parents and others and they take us to two of the main arguments of the present paper.

The first of these arguments is that these developments have proved difficult to fulfil (Ahlström, 2008; Kallós, 2009) in that the scientific part of the professional knowledge base for teachers has never significantly shifted to this kind of shared (unifying) critically reflective (praxis) knowledge (Beach, 2005), but has instead always retained an emphasis on the initial dualism established by the seminar tradition on the one hand and the academic on the other (Beach, 1995, 2000; Eriksson, 2009), which thus seems to have survived expressed policy ambitions to develop a common knowledge base for all teachers in compulsory school. The second is that the most recent cycle of reform breaks with the historically established efforts towards a research based professional unification and turns back towards a dualist policy, and that it does so in a very particular and in some senses peculiarly deceptive way (Beach, 2011). This, in that first of all a common shift toward shared progressive professional values and practices is described as having taken place through previous policy when most research on this subject claims the opposite and secondly that some very negative consequences are graphically described to have arisen from this common shift, in that the ‘progressive’ attitudes and content therein developed have been said to have led to a watering down of disciplinary knowledge, a lack of attention to how pupils learn effectively and poor performances in international comparison studies like PISA (SOU 2008:109). There has been a call in the recent round of reform from the right-centre coalition government for what they term to be a highly needed return to basics for these reasons of social democratic policy failure and a return to a teacher education structure that reflects the dualist structural characteristics (i.e.

primary – secondary school) and related knowledge needs of the school system (Government Bill 2009/10: 89). This involves a return to a dualist knowledge base.

The return to a formally endorsed dualist knowledge base in teacher education can be illustrated with two short extracts from the recent HUT report (SOU 2008:105 p 375 and 356), where the value of research products (science based content) in relation to the school subjects (as discipline content), on the one hand, and research-based teacher behaviour in relation to pupils' subject learning, on the other, are stressed, as is what this means for how teacher training should be designed. HUT suggests that:

In its simplest terms teacher education is seen as consisting of two parts: first knowledge in the subjects... and second knowledge on how teaching is shaped in relation to pupil learning... These two parts have different research conditions. School subjects are not abridged copies of scientific disciplines (but) should be built on this scientific knowledge. This has implications *for how teacher training should be designed...* Teachers need to have knowledge of how a given subject affects the conditions for learning... and knowledge of the social and administrative nature of teaching, i.e. they need to be able to manage conflicts, assessment, evaluation and so forth.

Thus, once again a more competence-oriented knowledge and a more functionary role concerning teacher behaviour is emphasised as of value to the beginning teacher as opposed to critical reflection (Sjöberg 2011). However, another central point in the HUT is also the need for different skills and training courses for teachers depending on the age group they are to teach in and it therefore proposes a return to a divided teacher training that in many ways mirrors educational traditions from the early nineteenth century. This is clearest in that according to HUT, teachers do not need to be particularly aware of or sensitive toward cultural, historical, economic and philosophical aspects of education in order to teach well, as was suggested in the cycles of reform from TEEC 60 to LUK 97 (SOU 1999:63). Instead it is mainly knowledge of the biology/maturity and psychology of the child and pupil groups and how this maturity impinges on 'what and how they can learn effectively' that is most important. A kind of re-traditionalisation is identified (Beach, 2011; Beach and Bagley, 2012). The ideal teacher is described as a psychologically knowledgeable person with specific skills tailored to pupil learning. The skills that are projected as the starting point for achieving this ideal image are described in terms of innate ability and personal talent (Sjöberg, 2011).

It is in this way that HUT thus breaks against the previously established reform trajectory. From LUT 74 to LUK 97 teaching was described in official policy-texts as moral-intellectual work that primarily required broad scientific knowledge rooted in educational psychology, sociology and other topics relevant to school and teacher training. HUT 07 redefines this primary mission as to provide a subject matter to students together with the skills of effective teaching tailored to pupil age and maturity. However, also important is the way in which this shift was presented as necessary, which was ‘in order to counter the loosely structured quasi-progessivism of pervious eras’, which left beginning teachers ‘with weak guidlelines for practice, limited knowledge of subjects and a weak relationship to the value of formal-traditional academic knowledge’ (SOU 2008:109; Government Bill 2009/10: 89).

### **The ethnographic analysis of policy into practice**

Our ethnographies have followed the processes relating the policy texts to practice inside the policy trajectory initiated by the TCD in 1952 from LUT 74 to HUT 08. Beach (1995, 1997, 2000) followed the development of LUT recommendations after the 1985 Teacher Education Reform Act and Eriksson and Player-Koro have followed the ‘enactment’ of the Teacher Education Renewal Act based on LUK 97 recommendations and the Government Bill 1999/2000:89. Player-Koro’s investigations are also ongoing. They link therefore also with the most recent reform cycle initiated by the HUT recommendations from 2008.

Perhaps the most stable finding from our collective research is that although different students in the three investigations expressed some different understandings concerning the demands of teaching, and different understandings of the skills and competencies needed by teachers, these differences were rarely related to which decade the research had been conducted in and thus which part of the policy cycle their education represented. Instead they were more related to the dual traditions that teacher education rests on historically and described in the earlier parts of the paper. This, in that the differences in comments by secondary students from Beach’s studies did not differ significantly from those in Player-Koro’s study some twenty years later (see e.g. Beach & Player-Koro, accepted), whilst the comments by students from these two studies differed in several respects from those made by student teachers in Eriksson’s investigations with prospective primary school teachers. Moreover, at the same time, similarities were noted in the comments from primary school student teachers in Beach’s early investigations and those made by the same student category in Eriksson’s research, and these differed in several respects to the comments made by the secondary-school focused students in Player-Koro’s investigations. In this sense what we can

see is that whilst policy may influence practice to some degree other features seem to have come into play that have had even greater influence. This point was made very forcibly in Beach's 1995 thesis.

We have summarized the different expressions about teacher education and professional knowledge from the student teachers under two sub-headings. They are.

1. Different ways of talking about professional knowledge needs
2. The balance between subject and subject curriculum theory knowledge and the value seen in curriculum theory content

The first of the above subheadings corresponds of course to the main interests of the investigation. The second summarises and organizes key dimensions in this interest in relation to the differences between the students' responses. The data on which they are built has come almost exclusively from periods of studies in mathematics education; subject studies and subject didactics. This was a way of limiting the number of obviously important variables in the research. The prospective secondary teachers also had a specialization in mathematics as one of their main subject studies areas.

### **Different ways of talking about professional knowledge needs**

Students' expressions suggest that there are several important differences in what they regard as key professional knowledge. One of these is in terms of what is described as the most significant professional knowledge needs of primary and secondary teachers and a second is whether this knowledge could be seen as a personal and perhaps even an innate ability that the prospective teacher simply has or does not have, or if it is something that can be objectified, taught and systematically developed during teacher education.

Several things have been noted by us in our analyses. One of these is that prospective primary teachers often emphasize 'understanding' and being sympathetic to the individual needs of pupils (Jemma, 1-6) as most important along with having general practical knowledge and understanding pupils, whilst 'the ability to grasp and convey the meaning of subject matter' (Ann 7-9) is phrased as the most important skill by the secondary teachers. Concerning the latter in particular two things are emphasized. These are (a) knowledge in the subject and (b) enthusiasm for the subject. These two are considered as 'the most essential aspects for learning in school' (Joanna, 7-9) by many of the prospective secondary school

teacher students regardless of which decade they studied to be a teacher in. A typical comment was as follows:

If there is one thing that I as a teacher have to be good at it is math... Another thing is that I can convey this knowledge and motivate pupils to learn. (Joseph 7-9)

Thus, what we can see is basically how the student from the two categories reaffirm the traditional binary knowledge needs of teaching. For primary teachers we are looking at general practical knowledge and understanding the psychology of the pupil. In respect of the secondary group the issue is recognising the importance of subject knowledge, motivation and communication skills 'and the teacher's need of a repertoire... of practical and social skills and teaching methods' (Allan, 7-9). Prospective secondary teachers looked for the most effective way or ways to teach a relevant content the primary-school focused students put things more often as follows:

Teaching is as much about the inside of the teacher and her relationship with the inside of the pupils... as it is external things like a subject content... That means psychology... Pupils are different (and) they learn differently. (Jemma 1-6)

As teachers we have to develop *different strategies* and *different ways to teach*... Pupils learn differently (and) have different learning needs, styles, experiences and so on and we must respect them and respond to their needs (Mary 1-6).

Once again then the differences expressed by prospective primary and secondary teachers respectively aptly demonstrate the two sides of the teacher education curriculum lifted up previously as seminar and academic tradition related. They are represented by Bernstein (1990, 2000) in terms of the Trivium (internal) and Quadrivium (external) relations of content and practice in teacher education. In line with them prospective secondary school teachers generally state that subject theory is important because you need to know the subjects first and foremost to be able to teach in them (i.e. external knowledge) whilst prospective primary teachers tend to emphasise knowing the psychology of their pupils. What they effectively say is that you cannot actually teach pupils anything you can only help them to learn and you can only do this if you understand them as individual persons and learners. This position emphasises internal knowledge and reflection. Thus what can be seen here in relation to

primary and secondary student teachers across the decades of our investigation are two very different but yet also historically traditional holdings to professional knowledge needs and the teacher role.

The predominance of these two holdings is significant, because what it suggests is that the progressivism that was targeted as both ubiquitous and highly problematic in HUT and its subsequent White paper text is actually only an artefact of a discourse that has been promoted by this policy cycle and socially constructed in a manner that seems to strike moral panic and promote a notion of much-needed change (Sjöberg, 2011). For inside teacher education itself there has been very little evidence of it during the past twenty-five years. Indeed on the contrary, when students have encountered teacher education they seem to have done so in line with the original ideals of the seminar or academic tradition. In one general methods and understanding pupils is central as is a repertoire of skills and knowledge that will enable prospective teachers to understand their pupils' learning styles and needs and tailor their teaching accordingly in order 'to cope with the differences in the pupils they will meet in the future' (Jemma, 1-6) is. In the other the subject is emphasized as what is most important. As several of student teachers put it:

...What we have called curriculum theory is what is expressed as perhaps most important. This should include they add 'different methods for working with mathematics' (Jonna, 1-6) and it must recognize that 'it is important to explain a variety of methods for us students' (Jemma, 1-6). This is because 'pupils are different and have different learning needs (and) we have to adapt our teaching to their needs and the ways they are able to learn' (Jonna, 1-6). This in one way shows something of a kernel of 'what the curriculum theory and methods component (Didaktik) should give' (Lotta, 7-9) from the perspective of both student groups: that is, 'some general skills, but also methodology' (Bella, 7-9). However, for one group this is in order 'to get 3-4 different ways to teach each thing' (Michael, 7-9) whilst for the other it is about 'being able to recognize and respond to the different learning needs and possibilities of different learners (due to) maturity (and) psychological make-up' (Jemma, 1-7)... This contrasts with the prospective secondary teacher emphasis on subjects and motivating and controlling pupils... There is a parallel with medicine between understanding the patient and treating a disease respectively. (Extract compiled from field-notes and fieldwork diary entries from the three studies)

### **On the balance between subject and subject curriculum theory knowledge and the value of curriculum theory content**

Suggested above is a particular role for curriculum theory and methods courses in the eyes of student teachers across three decades, which in line with the comments given, should provide 'a repertoire of communication skills relevant the subject and the age of the pupils we will teach' (Goran, 7-9). However, sometimes comments were different to this, as some students expressed an impossibility of really formally teaching and learning this kind of knowledge. As one student expressed it, 'skills such as these are personality related and in a sense innate' (Jon, 7-9). One of them used the subject theory tutor in mathematics to exemplify.

I think it's very important to have a thorough knowledge of the subject and good... social skills... Curriculum theory is to do with this... But it... cannot be achieved through teacher training... There are two parts, personality, and some education... But if you are not fit to play the role of a teacher it does not matter how much teacher education you have... It won't help... I can exemplify... You teach pretty well... despite not having formal teacher education and this curriculum theory... so we can skip that pedagogic curriculum stuff... We don't need it. (Asta, 7-9).

Being able to teach is something you are in a way born to... You can either do it or you can't. You either have the skills and so on or you don't... It's not really something you can teach I don't think. (Dave 7-9)

This kind of position was regularly expressed in Player-Koros's prospective secondary school student teacher research sample. What it says is that having knowledge of a subject is important as is the ability to communicate this knowledge but that 'this second kind of knowledge (is) less learned than just held' (Michael, 7-9). It is quite simply 'a kind of social competence that you have as a teacher' (Michael 7-9) and an 'appropriate innate ability and skill that a good teacher simply has' (Bella, 7-9). Many of the students expressed that formal education in this 'is not necessary or perhaps possible' (Asta 7-9):

I think it is very important to have a thorough knowledge of the subject and then that you have good mathematics skills as a teacher and a social competence. (Michael 7-9)

A good teacher should also have the ability to fit the topic to the student's age...  
Mathematics, mostly you have to be really good in mathematics itself. Then you also need to be good teachers, to teach as well, of course. (Lotta 7-9)

Again what is emerging here is evidence of the same trend previously discussed which suggests that students with a focus on teaching younger students have more interest in curriculum theory and methods alongside psychology and those who teach older pupils place more emphasis on formal subject knowledge. What the former say they want is 'knowledge about pupil learning and different teaching styles that will enable them to cope with these differences' (Jemma, 1-6) and they suggest that this kind of knowledge 'is something that can be taught and learned in teacher education' (Jonna, 1-7). The 7-9 students speak differently. These students see themselves as 'teaching a subject' (Michael). What they say they want from curriculum studies is that it 'shows them how to make the subject relevant in relevant ways' (Colin, 7-9) and they also tend to express 'that teaching can't be learnt' (Lotta, 7-9). It is more 'something you can do if you know the subject and have the right personal qualities and interest' (Michael, 7-9). These students thus therefore almost always ask clearly for more knowledge of the subject but very rarely more curriculum theory knowledge. The practical knowledge of teaching is regarded as primarily personal and scientifically unproblematic. Prospective primary teachers ask for more curriculum theory in order to develop knowledge about and teaching skills for meeting pupil differences on their own terms. Here it is subjects, pupil differences, and what lies behind them, that is unproblematic:

We have enough curriculum theory content knowledge in math. You know how to teach and you know you should teach... We need more subject theory... (Ben 7-9)

The subject knowledge needs per se in mathematics as such are fulfilled very much through entry demands... Of course I don't mean we don't need any kind of pure mathematics at all. What I mean is that you do, up to a point, and that it is good to have this knowledge to teach the subject.... Curriculum theory and pedagogy should teach us both about pupil differences, how they affect pupil learning skills and capabilities and how to deal with them... (Hugo 1-6)

The maths here is mainly repetition of upper-secondary school content and even secondary school... It can still be quite tough for some of us of course. We are not mathematicians. (Judith, 1-6)

Subject theory is more important to us than curriculum theory and a higher priority, right now. We have to have something to teach in and we have to pass exams in it... We need the subject. (However), we also need methods to communicate and motivate pupils... The subjects need to be possible to teach at the age level we are teaching in and curriculum theory should give examples among other things... (Michael, 7-9)

The differences expressed here are technically normative positions toward the original seminar and academic teacher education traditions described by Jedemark (2006). They stretch across the twenty-five year time-span of our data production and they but they are also highlighted as valuable in most recent round of policy, which is attempting to move teacher education policy in these directions to counter, as mentioned previously, the loose progressivism that the present government claims has characterized recent teacher education development. In this sense the new policy cycle (i.e. post-HUT) is legitimating old practices that should have become outmoded through the enactment of reforms in the 80s and 90s but didn't and it is doing so on the basis of blaming progressive practices and values that have never really come into play for the current performance related shortcomings of the Swedish school and its teachers. There is thus something quite odd about this new policy cycle.

### **Discussion: Using Bernstein to understand changes in the policy trajectory**

As with respect to Beach and Bagley's recent article (Beach & Bagley, 2012), Bernstein's (1990, 2000) discussions of teacher education and teacher education pedagogic discourse can be a useful tool for analysing the 'developments' we are discussing. Bernstein distinguishes between two fundamentally different forms of discourse in relation to university content that reflect the dichotomy between academic and everyday knowledge that can also be related to the seminar and academic traditions of teacher education (see also Eriksson, 2009 and Player-Koro, in production, a). The first discourse is a horizontal discourse. It is embedded in everyday language and expresses common sense knowledge related to practical goals (Beach, 2005). It is also often oral and context-bound according to Bernstein, who also suggested that this 'generic' form of knowledge has gained considerable ground in teacher education in the eighties and nineties reforms in England and Wales (Beach, 2011).

The second form of discourse is called a vertical discourse. It develops in specialized academic fields to form a hierarchically organized conceptual structure with a robust grammar and specialized syntax as a very esoteric language (Bernstein, 2000, pp.170 -171) and is represented in subjects like physics, mathematics and history and professional knowledge in fields like medicine and law. Schools and universities select content from these subjects and areas according to Bernstein (2000) and act as *arenas of re-contextualisation* of the knowledge produced there, with a significant degree of autonomy from economic production and the rest of the political-administrative and cultural superstructure, including the media. It is what the policy trajectory from 1952 to 2000 was aiming toward but failed to attain according to the present research, as well as previous investigations (e.g. Gran, 1995; Beach, 1995, 2005; Kallós, 2009; SOU 1999:63). It was particularly emphasised in the LUT report (SOU 1978:86) and according to researchers like Zeichner (2010) and Apple (2001, p.195) it is important in determining whether teachers in schools after teacher-training will be able to understand the ideological and political restructuring that is going on around them and deconstruct the forces involved, in terms of their impact on working conditions and the content and meaning of professional labour (Beach, 2011)<sup>1</sup>.

As well as horizontal and vertical knowledge discourses Bernstein (1990) also used the two terms *teacher education Trivium* and *Quadrivium* to show a shift between the two different historical components of teacher education we are writing on (i.e. the seminar and then primary versus the academic and then subject traditions). These have been briefly mentioned earlier in the paper. They are on the one hand a general component similar to that highlighted by Gran (1995), TEEC 60 and LUT 74 as general pedagogical knowledge. This component (the teacher education Trivium, Bernstein, 1990, 2000) is related to internal control and the development of thinking skills and attitudes toward teaching and learning processes and their outcomes and derives from a problematisation of internal learning and reflection. The second component (Quadrivium) is related to the ‘external’ independent

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<sup>1</sup> Similar developments to those aimed for in the Swedish teacher education policy trajectory can also be seen in several other European countries such as England and Wales, Scotland, Norway, Finland, Spain and Greece (Mentor et al, 2004; Goodson, 2008). Unfortunately, like Garm and Karlsen (2004) and the recent political developments in Sweden and other countries suggest (Furlong, 2006; Kallós, 2009), teacher education now seems to be heading towards a narrower focus on measurable skills that put less emphasis on sociological, philosophical, political and ideological knowledge. Subject content and technical-professional knowledge and skills, together with a focus on results and external control is now more dominant (Sjöberg, 2011). But in practice this is the way things seem to have been done for decades, despite attempts at transformation toward more progressivist practices, inside teacher education, particularly for students specialising to be subject teachers in strong subjects like mathematics and science (Beach, 1995, 2000; Player-Koro, in press).

subjects or disciplines that students will be expected to teach in schools as teachers (Beach & Bagley, 2012).

The organisation and communication of content, forms of communication, the relative distributions, and relations between these respective traditions have varied over time in relation to teacher education development according to Bernstein (1990, p 158), who also identified six steps to this development in Bernstein (2000). These are steps where:

1. The same lecturer covered both the Trivium and the Quadrivium
2. Lecturers were specialised to one or the other side of this dislocation
3. Education studies became specialised in e.g. the philosophy, sociology, psychology and history of education
4. A new body of re-contextualised knowledge emerges between the discourses of education studies and school subjects that was, Bernstein (1990) suggested, in part 'technical in focus and probably in aspiration' (p. 158). This subject (called curriculum theory or didactics) became increasingly technical in terms of its relationship to school subjects
5. The specialised disciplines of educational studies become weakened as 'political, cultural and academic sites' (p. 161) in a manner that leaves psychology as the only remaining education specialisation. This specialisation is taught in combination with subject knowledge, curriculum studies or didactics and a professional training dimension through apprenticeship-like-learning in schools
6. Teacher education professional components become fully conditioned to apprenticeship-like-learning in schools and are often taught consecutively to the academic subject component

The first five steps are represented in the recommendations and Bills we have discussed earlier in the paper. But step five is the one that best characterises the most recent reform (Government Bill 2009/10:89). However, we want to ask two questions of this reform. Firstly, was it really necessary or desired given the practical examples of teacher education on student teacher understandings of what is important knowledge for teachers and secondly what effects can it have given this recognition. The new policy legitimizes sacred academic knowledge in subjects as relevant to and valuable for teacher education at the secondary level in particular (Sjöberg, 2011). However, at the same time it also 'de-legitimises' such sacred (academic, theoretical) knowledge for the professional studies components (education studies, curriculum

theory and methods), with the exception of a very traditional learning and developmental psychology and brain-based theories of learning, and it formally disqualifies specialized content concerning the sociological, political, philosophical, economic and ideological dimensions of professional knowledge (from for instance LUT 74) as relevant content for teacher education (Ahlström, 2008; Kallós, 2009; Sjöberg, 2011).

The new policy cycle thus shifts the balance of the formal/official voice on teacher education in other words, from the Trivium to the Quadrivium elements, and puts external knowledge of facts (information) in subjects into a key position together with a legitimising technical knowledge of how to make them relevant to and possible to learn and reproduce by pupils in school. This shift of balance is against the policy trajectory from TEEC 60 to LUK 97 (Beach & Bagley, 2012) but in line with what common sense seems to be telling teachers, student teachers and others both today and in the recent past about what kind of knowledge is most needed in teacher education and why.

### **Concluding reflections**

The statements about the professional knowledge needs of teachers expressed by the students in our research differ primarily in relation to the primary – secondary distinction. Prospective secondary teachers highlight the need to be good at subjects in order to be able to teach them and so as to be able to pass quite demanding subject matter examinations. Prospective primary teachers talk more about understanding pupil differences and psychology and of having a repertoire of different methods and models for teaching. Possessing subject knowledge appropriate to the age group they will teach is emphasized above the need of highly demanding subject studies.

These statements are at one and the same time very unsurprising and yet also surprising to us. They are unsurprising in that they have been identified in research over at least the past fifty years on the traditional characteristics of student teacher's understandings of their future work and their knowledge needs. What is surprising, at least from the position of policy optimism (i.e. the belief that policies can and do change things relatively unproblematically in desired directions) is that these kinds of understanding seem to have survived a series of reforms between 1952 and 1999 that were meant to change them. These include the creation of the Teacher Colleges, the introduction of full research professorships in education specialisms (pedagogy and methodology) in these colleges, the development of scientific pedagogical, sociological, psychological and philosophical knowledge for the teaching profession, the intended incorporation of this knowledge in the teacher education curriculum,

its specialization, its integration with subject studies and the deepening of scientific professional knowledge through bringing teacher education into closer proximity with research inside the university system. However, what is also perhaps surprising is that the most recent round of reform (HUT 2007 through Government Bill 2009/10:89) is written as if the previous reforms have had an effect and that radical pedagogical progressivism is rife in today's schools with devastating consequences for individual learning and aggregated performances that must be corrected. The latest round of reform expresses that the problem with teacher education is the absence of conservative values and that, in order to save schools and society, they must be reintroduced (Sjöberg, 2011; Beach, 2011). Nothing could be less true than this according to the present paper.

The reflections above can be related to Bernstein's stage model where what becomes apparent is that whilst policy has shifted over the years from a vocational-practical model to a model divided and then specialised in terms of a division of Trivium and Quadrivium elements, followed by an emphasis on the Quadrivium together with a technified Trivium element and psychology, before finally finishing up in a re-vocationalisation tendency, student teachers seem hardly to have changed their values over time. They have remained, at least in the past twenty-five years, tightly tied to the idea of the need of subject knowledge coupled to practical teaching skills and an understanding for pupils' differences in ability and commitment. These conservative values have however now once again also become the values of the official Government policy position.

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