

Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Sweden case study report 1 Centre of Diversity in Education: A city resource centre for schools of many cultures

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The EPASI project is a programme of analysis of educational programmes in fourteen European countries, designed to address various forms of social inequality. The project analysis was conducted in the period 2007 – 2009. This report is part of the overall project, details of which are at <http://www.epasi.eu>.

The analysis is intended to be used within the overall framework of the EPASI programme.

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- Malmö högskola (Sweden)



Centre of Diversity in Education: A city resource for schools of many cultures

Summary

Theme: Disabilities, ethnic minorities, gender, indigenous minorities, linguistic minorities, religious minorities, socio-economic disadvantage.

The Resource Centre for Diversity (in Swedish: Resurscentrum för mångfaldens skola, RMS) programme is run by the education department as instructed by the City of Malmö. The RMS is a unique collaboration between the City of Malmö, the National Agency for School Improvement and Malmö University. This collaboration is a development of the special partnership existing between the City of Malmö and the University's Teacher Training Programme. It also comprehends the International Migration and Ethnic Relations (IMER) and Health and Society programmes (HS). All groups have been equally concerned with and involved in the planning and implementation of the centre¹.

Background

In 2002, Malmö community and Malmö University established a research collaboration named "Studies in diversity and schools of many cultures" and "Equality and gender order in multi-ethnic preschools and schools". In an application to the government it was stated that research collaboration however, is not sufficient from the schools' point of view. There was a need for an arena where teachers, heads of schools, politicians and officials could meet and discuss before decisions were made. This led to a process in which Malmö community together with Malmö University, School of Teacher Education created a project group in order to make suggestions for the establishment of a Centre for Diversity in Education.

In Malmö, problems related to segregation and exclusion are well-known. There are schools where almost all pupils have a foreign background, and with another mother tongue than Swedish, too many pupils who do not pass the demands for a place in the upper secondary school, the teaching environments is too noisy and disorderly for anyone to study successfully in and so on. The constant focusing on problems like that has at the same time led to limited emphasis on the possibilities connected with the cultural heterogeneous school in which children and young people may grow up and develop the kind of complex social and cultural competencies needed in the modern and multicultural society.

In a governmental official report written by a school committee and titled *Krock eller möte* (SOU 1996:143, "Collision or meeting", our translation), multicultural issues and the possibility of creating resource centres for research and development are discussed. Centres for diversity in London and Stockholm were sources of inspiration when the planning of a resource centre in Malmö began.

In the report (*ibid*), multiculturalism is emphasised as a dimension in all education. The committee wanted to avoid discussions about special solutions for special groups, since special solutions have a tendency to point out groups as the problem *per se*. Having a multicultural perspective, raises in turn questions on how to define *culture* and *cultural identity* and what is meant by negotiating one's identity. It's often the case that immigrant cultures in an ethnocentric benevolence are looked upon as some kind of supplement to *the* Swedish.

¹ RMS: <http://www.Malmo.se/skolautbildning/resurscentrumformangfaldensskola/centreofdiversityineducation>

Many of the schools in Malmö are collaborating with Malmö University/School of Teacher Education as partner schools. This was considered to be a good basis for further collaboration in a resource centre.

Another background is The Mentoring Programme Nightingale (see project description) which began in 1997 as a collaboration between the School of Teacher Education at Malmö University and some of Malmö's multicultural schools. The idea behind the programme is that the mentor shall give the child a positive role model through a personal relationship and this will help strengthen the child's confidence. The goal is that the child will perform better in and out of school and will be more likely to apply for university when the time comes. Children between the age of eight and 12 with immigrant background are recruited. Every child gets a student mentor. For further reading, see: http://www.mah.se/templates/Page_16157.asp.

Aims and objectives of the Resource Centre for Diversity

“The RMS strives to promote all aspects of integration and diversity such as ethnic background, gender, socio-economic situation, sexual orientation, functional disabilities etc. The aim is to help more students achieve Sweden's national education objectives, help more students to master the Swedish language - and provide more people the chance to enjoy basic rights of democracy and personal security”².

Funding

In 2004 the city of Malmö appropriated 1,000,000 SEK to start the planning of a resource centre for diversity (RMS). A year later, the Educational Department and the Swedish Agency for School Improvement together appropriated 5,000,000 SEK and Malmö 1,000,000 SEK for the start and running of the RMS during 2005 and 2006.

Budget for 2007: the municipal grant for 2007 is 3,000,000 SEK, plus 2,000,000 SEK from the state grant. In addition to this, there is a “state diversity grant” of 11,600,000 SEK. This grant is part of the support to 32 so called “dialogue communes”. (For further reading, see project description on Dialogue communes).

Six doctoral students are admitted for licentiate examination. The RMS is funding part-time studies for four years (full-time studies for licentiate is two years) for five of them and Malmö University for one. Malmö University also funds the “scientific leader” at 40 percent.

RMS

The cost in all for supervising of the doctoral students financed by the RMS during four years is 431 000 SEK and for two doctoral courses per year 252 000 SEK.

Malmö University

MU is financing what is called “postgraduate grants” for the six doctoral students; 30,000 SEK in all for four years, the approximate cost of 1,000,000 SEK for one doctoral student (not yet employed) at half time and 40 percent for the scientific leader, 11,000,000 SEK for the four years.

The state grant cease during the autumn 2008 and for the present there are no formal decision on how the commune will continue to finance the centre and its activities. The centre has applied for another 5,800,000 SEK in order to create a research and development centre for the schools in Malmö.

² <http://www.Malmo.se/skolautbildning/resurscentrumformangfaldensskola/centreofdiversityineducation>

Description

From 2004 to 2005 the centre was accommodated in temporary premises. Since January 2007, the centre is established in new premises in the quarter Rönnen in the inner city area of Malmö. The centre is for pre-school, compulsory school, comprehensive school, doctoral education and in service training for parents and staff.

At Centre for Diversity in Education, people working within the school sector can attend lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences with diversity as a theme. Teachers and researchers meet for exchange of knowledge and experiences. The centre has a media section where the visitors may take part of research and pedagogical debate.

The centre offers

- Further education free of charge
- Thematic weeks regarding diversity
- Research education for pedagogues in cooperation with Malmö University
- Research study groups in cooperation with Malmö University
- Support to local development projects

(For leaflet see reference³)

A group of six doctoral students, all working as teachers in preschool or school, are studying part-time (50 percent) at the centre. The rest of the time, the students are working in their ordinary preschools or schools. The research is carried out in the teachers' preschools and schools and concerns their ordinary work. The scientific leader from Malmö University is working 40 percent of his time at the centre.

The centre is also commissioned for specific assignments by the National Agency for School Improvement. This includes for example competence development for school leaders and teachers, such as "Attitudes and ways of interacting", carried out within a project including 32 "dialogue municipalities". (For further reading about "Dialogue schools", see project description).

Evaluation

An evaluation has not yet been done. Regarding the state grants, the RMS work is going to be evaluated by Mälardalen and Halmstad Universities.

References

Krock eller möte (SOU 1996:143). Stockholm: Nordstedts Tryckeri AB

<http://www.Malmo.se/skolautbildning/resurscentrumformangfaldensskola/centreofdiversityineducation> (RMS)

<http://www.Malmo.se/skolautbildning/resurscentrumformangfaldensskola/centreofdiversityineducation.4.1dacb2b107a2fd998c80005867.html> (Leaflet)

http://www.mah.se/templates/Page_16157.aspx (The Mentor Programme Nightingale)

³<http://www.Malmo.se/skolautbildning/resurscentrumformangfaldensskola/centreofdiversityineducation.4.1dacb2b107a2fd998c80005867.html>