

## Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

# Sweden case study report 3 Second Language Teaching for Communities with Non-native Speakers

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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>.

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## Second Language Teaching for Communities with Non-native Speakers

In 2006 the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement offered 32 “dialogue communities” special support through so called development dialogue. These communities must have at least 18 percent of pupils with a foreign background and reach the educational goals to a level of 75 percent or less. All the participating communities have produced a brief report where the dialogue project is described and partly evaluated.

### Background

One of the 32 dialogue communities is Gnosjö, a small community in the southwest of Sweden. Gnosjö is well known all over Sweden because of its great number of industries and because of the low unemployment in the community. There are little more than 10,000 inhabitants in the community and approximately 25 percent are immigrants or refugees. The low unemployment in the community has made integration of the immigrants easier. There are two areas with compulsory schools and one upper secondary school in the community. At the most there are 30 percent pupils with immigrant or refugee background in the schools. The largest groups are Vietnamese, Chinese and Bosnians.

### Economy

The community has received in all 2,550,000 SEK from Swedish National Agency for School Improvement. 1,400,000 SEK is intended for efforts and activities that have to do with diversity. 1,250,000 SEK is intended for employing resource persons. Eventually Gnosjö will receive another 750,000 SEK from Swedish National Agency for School Improvement. Above this the community itself has put 1,400,000 SEK into the project. During the school, year 2006/2007 three resource persons were employed in the community.

### Working fields

Since the number of pupils with another mother tongue than Swedish has been high for a long period, the schools have based their pedagogical methods and their ways of teaching on those conditions. The teaching of Swedish as a second language is characterised by some great flexibility. The educational efforts that the community has chosen to emphasise have been summarised in seven different working fields:

- *Competence about diversity.* Aim: To increase the pedagogues’ diversity competence as a base for diversity actions.
- *Including/cooperation.* Aim: To increase the influence and participation of the parents of the immigrant pupils in school. To increase the inclusion of pupils with immigration background.
- *Reception.* Aim: Well functioning reception strategies. Cooperation with other community authorities. To give pupils and their parents rich information about school activities and a positive, structured and well functioning reception.
- *Diagnostic testing.* Aim: All schools in the community are supposed to develop well functioning tools for diagnostic testing the immigrant children’s language skills in Swedish. The result of the tests will form the basis of how economical resources are distributed. The teaching of Swedish as a second language shall be adapted to actual needs.

- *“Mother tongue” teaching.* Aim: Goals and curricula will be elaborated for the different mother tongues. Studying support and guidance will be offered. The competence of mother tongue teachers will be increased on different levels. Mother tongue teaching and teachers shall be included in the overall school activities.
- *Language development.* Aim: To ensure a long-term training of language skills from pre-school to upper secondary school. The teachers should also have the competence to deal with illiteracy. The competence of the teachers concerning Swedish as a second language should be improved.
- *Literature/libraries.* Aim: Schools and teachers shall promote the pupils’ language development and encourage their interest in reading. Mother tongue teaching should be supported. Increase the access to literature written in the language of the pupils.

The different educational activities that will start and already have started in Gnosjö during 2006 are as follows.

### ***Plan and aims for language development***

A plan for language development from pre-school to upper secondary school will be elaborated. The plan shall include teaching of Swedish as a second language and mother tongue.

#### *Inclusion*

Proposals concerning how parents of immigrant pupils can be encouraged to take part in school activities will be elaborated. Overall information will be translated. A “translation pool” will be organised. All parents of immigrant children will receive information about the Swedish school system and how schools deal with cooperation between schools and parents in mother tongue. All parents shall actively take part in making individual developmental plans (IUP) for the pupils. All pupils shall experience that they are included in the schools in the community.

#### *Reception*

Routines for reception of children with foreign background will be elaborated. Everybody working in schools shall have knowledge about these routines. One person in each school shall be responsible for the reception of the immigrant pupils. The teaching in Swedish as a second language shall be organised in a flexible way.

#### *Literature/author seminars*

The reading interest of pupils with foreign background shall be encouraged in both Swedish and in their mother tongue. The access to literature in their mother tongue shall be increased. Seminars with authors will be arranged for teachers in order to increase their competence to use literature in teaching. All pupils in Gnosjö shall have access to all books in both the school library and the community library

#### *Studying support*

A part-time teacher (75 percent) in Vietnamese will be employed for pupils in year 7-9 and upper secondary school who have problems in particular subjects as they are taught in Swedish.

#### *Overall diversity knowledge*

1. Six lectures on culture or language will be provided on three different occasions. Each teacher must attend at least three lectures.
2. Relocated education on diversity will be arranged for headmasters.
3. Education on overall diversity knowledge will be arranged for welfare officers.

A gender perspective shall permeate all these activities.

### *Diagnostic testing 2006/2007*

Education on the analysis of texts written by pupils with Swedish as a second language is carried out in cooperation with Gothenburg University. The competence to carry out these analyses shall be represented at each school. Every teacher shall have the competence to use the material “Europeisk språkportfolio” (European language portfolio, our translation).

### *Process leader education 2006/2007*

Process leader education: this started in September 2006 in cooperation with the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement.

### *The upper second school “preparatory”*

Directed education for pupils with immigrant background within the individual program (IV). The education will contain social science and other activities in order to give pupils knowledge about the Swedish society. The aim is that the pupils shall improve their Swedish knowledge and skills, get better subject knowledge and to achieve increased integration.

### *Mother tongue teaching*

More formally educated mother tongue teachers shall be employed and all mother tongue teachers shall be connected to the schools in the community. All immigrant pupils in the community shall successfully continue their education in upper secondary school. All “special pedagogues” shall have knowledge and competence of how to work with illiterate pupils and they shall also have the competence to diagnose the knowledge and intelligence of pupils with limited language skills.

### *Language development*

Teachers who are teaching Swedish as a second language shall have at least 20 credit points (30 ECTS) in Swedish as a second language. All schools in the community shall work out a language developmental plan from preschool to upper secondary school.

The aims and effects with the pedagogical projects above will be evaluated.

## **What has been done so far?**

In a preliminary report, *Delrapport inom mångfaldsdialogen* (Svenningsson 2007), Thomas Svenningsson, the developmental leader in the community briefly describes what has been carried out within the diversity project up to the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2007.

### ***Diversity competence***

- Six external lecturers have been contracted to carry out 14 lectures on culture and language.
- Teachers will be offered advanced course on diversity competence.
- Training on diversity competence for headmasters has been started in cooperation with two other communities.
- Four “gender pedagogues” have been picked out, one in pre-school, two in compulsory school and one in upper secondary school.
- Training for all welfare officers in Gnosjö and two other communities is carried out in cooperation with Uppsala University.

### ***Including/cooperation***

- Two process leaders have been employed from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007. The process leaders report continuously to the chief education officer and the developmental leader in the community.
- One teacher has been employed to carry out the project *The upper second school preparatory*.

### ***Reception***

- New routines for reception of immigrants and immigrant pupils have been elaborated.
- Documents and routines are revised.
- Cooperation between social and educational authorities has been initiated.
- Documents for immigrant parents will be translated. This was carried out in autumn 2007.
- In every school there shall be one teacher who is responsible for reception of new immigrant pupils.

### ***Diagnostic testing***

- A network of teachers of Swedish as a second language has informed teachers about the language test "Bokup"<sup>1</sup>. The leading group of the project has sanctioned the use of the test.
- During 2007 30-35 teachers will attend training on analysing pupils' texts.
- A new organization of Swedish as a second language has been decided.

### ***Mother tongue teaching***

- An in-service training has been decided for the mother tongue teachers in the community.
- Study support in the most frequent mother tongue (Vietnamese) has started.
- Mother tongue teaching shall be carried out with in the ordinary school timetable

### ***Language development***

- An education (20 credit points) on language development, in cooperation with the University of Jönköping, started in the autumn semester 2007.
- In-service training on early reading methods for special pedagogues started in autumn 2007.
- One of the process leaders is elaborating a plan for the whole community on language development from pre-school to upper secondary school.

### ***Literature/library***

- A computer-based register system, called Free-Lib, was installed in all school libraries during autumn 2007.
- Four schools attended a library project, initiated by the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement and the University of Borås.
- The children book writer Åsa Stork will visit all schools with immigrant pupils. Stork has a special program for pupils with a foreign language.

### **Preliminary evaluation**

At the end of the report, Svenningsson identifies the following:

Many teachers and pupils have been involved in the planning of the projects. Both the engaged teachers and pupils have responded to the planned activities in a very positive way.

It has been discovered that there are pupils whose language skills are so poor that they have problems with their learning. Their language skills are very poor both in Swedish and their mother tongue.

Since many people have been involved in the different activities, different competences could be taken care of. Thus the work carried out has been more efficient, with better results. One example is the work that has been carried out by the three process leaders.

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<sup>1</sup> Our impression is that Bokup is a comprehensive and very traditional language training material, mainly focusing on formal language aspects and isolated training of different language skills. Therefore, for us it is surprising that the teachers decided to choose this material.

## References

[http://www.skolutveckling.se/innehall/mangfald\\_likvardighet/utvecklingsdialoger/gnosjo](http://www.skolutveckling.se/innehall/mangfald_likvardighet/utvecklingsdialoger/gnosjo)

Svenningsson, Thomas (2007) *Delrapport inom mångfaldsdialogen. Gnosjö kommun 1<sup>st</sup> June 2007*, Gnosjö.