Organisational Aspects

In Sweden the involvement of teachers in continuing professional development (CPD) is not stated in terms of professional duty or directly linked to promotion mechanisms. On occasions, certain CPD courses become necessary for some groups of teachers in the wake of fresh legislation. Following the endorsement of new qualification requirements by the 2010 Education Act, teachers who did not meet them were expected to take certain CPD courses in order to teach particular age groups or subjects. The only general admission requirement for competence development courses is that the teacher is employed at a school. Certain courses, however, can require that participants are teaching certain subjects or within certain sectors of education. Individual evaluations of teachers and their level of responsibility are taken into account when the school head and teacher union representatives negotiate their salaries, qualifications obtained via CPD would also be considered.

The teachers’ unions negotiate working conditions, including the time allocated for continuing professional development, with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges kommuner och landsting). In a central agreement between the parties they have agreed to set aside 104 hours (as indicative value) per employee per school year during the teachers’ regulated working time. CPD mainly takes place during study days, evenings or pupils’ holidays.

The needs and training are established locally, by municipalities and schools, in consultation with various interests, including teachers. A CPD plan is not compulsory, but the education provider (the municipality or a private body) must ensure that staff has opportunities for professional development. The local authorities are formally responsible for providing skills development for teachers. No central directives are issued by the government, the Ministry of Education and Research or the Swedish National Agency for Education stating that teachers must take specific training programmes. But the agency does provide grants to local authorities and schools for skills development in national priority areas.

Under the Education Act the organiser of education is obliged to ensure that CPD is available for teaching staff. Higher education institutions and the regional development centres are the primary organisers of publicly funded CPD. Other organisers are the public service company which produces educational broadcasting, the teachers’ trade unions, state authorities, independent educational companies and civil society organisations. The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) provides digital materials and organises conferences on specific themes with funding from the Ministry of Education and Research (Utbildningsdepartementet).
Incentives, supporting measures and funding for Participation in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Activities

Continuing professional development (CPD [1]) for teachers was introduced at the end of the 19th century as part of the central regulation concerning contents and organisation of education. There was no real organised CPD for teachers until the middle of the 20th century. The introduction of new curricula for compulsory and upper secondary school in 1962 and 1968 respectively coincided with organised continuing professional development, which became increasingly guided by the state during the 1960s.

In 1990 the parliament decided on a new division of responsibility between the state and the municipality. Today the guiding principle is that continuing professional development is a local responsibility, whilst setting the goals for this training, in compulsory and upper secondary schools, is a state responsibility. It is also a state responsibility to follow-up and evaluate local activities. It is the responsibility of the employers to make sure that the teachers get the CPD needed and it is, in principle, compulsory for teachers to take part in such training.

The municipalities have funds set aside for CPD of their staff and decide on its scope. The government can set aside funds for the municipalities and independent schools to support their work on developing the competence of teachers through extra funding to the Swedish National Agency for Education. The state shall, by means of the funds made available to the Swedish National Agency for Education, steer activities towards nationally important areas, taking into account that it is the principal organiser of the school that has the responsibility for implementing competence development.

A recent example is a programme called the "A boost for Teachers" (Lärarlyftet [5]) where the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) publishes a catalogue of courses for teachers too choose from and which teachers can participate in while retaining 80 per cent of their salaries. In the programme nearly a quarter of all teachers received further education between 2007 and the end of 2011 and the programme is planned to continue through 2018. Some 30 000 fully qualified teachers were offered a chance to study at a higher education institution 2007-11. During their studies they received 80 per cent of their current pay. At the same time the government put SEK 1 billion into supplementary education for teachers who are experienced but not fully qualified (to make it possible for them to obtain the relevant teaching qualification), continuing professional education for teachers of Swedish for immigrants (Svenskundervisning för invandrare, SFI [6]) and training for school heads. An essential element in the work of The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket [3]) is skill development for school staff. The agency has the responsibility for the national headteacher training and certain funding for professional development for teachers.

The Swedish National Agency for Education was commissioned by the government in July 2015 to develop and implement national school development programmes targeted at principals and schools. The aim is to develop and strengthen education to give students the best possible opportunities to develop. The agency will coordinate training programmes in literacy, natural science and technology and mathematics.

The Education Act (Skollagen [7])

The Ministry of Education and Research (Utbildningsdepartementet [4])