2020

New rules for denominational schools

A newly published report accounts for the commission of inquiry to analyse the legal framework for denominational schools. The inquiry proposes the following:

- Definitions referring to denomination are to be included in the Education Act (Skollagen [1]).
- Denominational orientation is to be declared.
- Requirement that participation in educational elements including ingredients of denominational character are to be voluntary must be stricter.
- A stop to setting up new denominational schools meaning that after a certain date no more applications for denominational schools will be approved.

For more information in Swedish [2]

The way for more pupils to gain eligibility for upper secondary school

To get through school is one of the most important factors to get a job and to become an active citizen. The Government has therefore given a special investigator the task to propose how pupils who risk of not becoming eligible for upper secondary school will get through school. This could be done through help with homework, summer school and prolonged compulsory schooling for recent immigrants.

During the last decade the socio-economic background of pupils has become more important for how pupils perform at school. It has become more demanding for schools to compensate for that and to give each pupil the support they need to develop as far as they can.

The task will be reported at latest on 12 April 2021.

For more information in Swedish [3]

More emphasis on factual knowledge in the proposal for updated curricula. Time schedule to be adjusted.

Facts are emphasized more clearly, differences between school years are made clearer and knowledge requirements are improved. These are the main points of the proposal for updated curricula that the Swedish National Agency for Education has now presented to the Government.

In some parts the curricula have been made more detailed and in other parts less detailed than before. Some of the details that are now included are the Bible, the National anthem, the most
common psalms, lyricism and drama.

In addition the Government has given the National Agency for Education an assignment to adjust the time schedules due to the new curricula.

For more information in Swedish on curricula [4]

For more information in Swedish on time schedules [5]

2019

Increasing state subsidies to increase equality in schools

The government introduced in 2018 state subsidies to strengthen equality and knowledge development in schools. The subsidies are distributed according to the number of pupils and their socioeconomic background. The one billion Swedish crowns in 2018 was increased to 3.5 billions in 2019 and is now proposed to increase to 4.9 billions for 2020. The planned amount for 2021 is up to 6.2 billions.

More information in Swedish [6]

Increased mandate for the Swedish Schools Inspectorate to close schools

The government has appointed an investigator to assist the Ministry of Education and Research to investigate and propose an increased mandate for the Swedish Schools Inspectorate to close independent and public schools with serious and recurring shortcomings.

A goal is that the legislation, as far as possible, should be the same for both independent and public schools.

The investigation should be reported by 15 August 2020.

More information in Swedish [7]

Automated marking of national exams to facilitate for teachers

The Swedish National Agency for Education was commissioned by the government to develop and provide digitized national exams and these are now partially in use at Swedish schools. Now the government has commissioned the Swedish National Agency for Education to develop automated marking of national exams for those parts where this is possible in order to decrease the administrative burden of teachers.

In addition, the Swedish National Agency for Education is commissioned to investigate how centralized marking of national exams could be introduced.

More information in Swedish [8]

Teacher assistants and other professions to relieve teachers

Sweden has a teacher shortage that the Government is taking measures to turn around. In the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill for 2019, the Government proposed that SEK 475 million should be allocated to a state grant in order to employ more teacher assistants. The objective is for teachers to be able to focus more on teaching. The Swedish National Agency for Education is tasked with developing support
material concerning how teacher assistants, social workers and other professional groups can work to relieve teachers.

The support material should provide guidance to school organizers and school heads about how they can relieve the teachers by allowing other occupational groups to perform certain tasks. In the assignment, the Agency is tasked to identify which tasks, according to the school regulations, need to be performed by teachers, and give examples of what can be performed by other professions. The work with the support material must be permeated by teachers who are responsible for planning and implementing the teaching.

The assignment is given through an amendment to the Swedish National Agency for Education’s appropriation directions for the financial year 2019 and should be reported to the Government no later than 28 February 2020.

Information in Swedish. [9]

The Government wants to increase knowledge about Agenda 2030 and the national environmental goals in schools

The Government has given the National Agency for Education an assignment to show how the global goals in Agenda 2030 and the national environmental goals connect to the school’s steering documents and increase knowledge about how sustainable development can be integrated into teaching.

The objective of the assignment is to give school heads and school staff an increased awareness of Agenda 2030 and the national environmental goals and thereby improve the conditions for education for sustainable development. The three dimensions of sustainability economic, social and ecological should be able included in the teaching.

The assignment is given through an amendment to the Swedish National Agency for Education’s appropriation directions for the financial year 2019 and should be reported to the Government no later than 31 January 2020.

More information in Swedish. [10]

The Swedish National Agency for Education wants to strengthen the content of the curricula regarding sex and cohabitation

In 2018 The Swedish National Agency for Education was commissioned by the Government to review the curricula and if necessary, propose how it can be clarified in order to better support teaching in the field of sex and cohabitation. The assignment relates to the curricula for the compulsory school (grundskolan) and corresponding school forms, upper secondary school (gymnasieskolan), upper secondary school for pupils with learning disabilities (gymnasiesärskolan) and municipal adult education (kommunal vuxenutbildning, komvux).

The Agency was instructed to pay particular attention to issues of honor-related violence and oppression, consent and pornography.

In the final commission report which was published 31 May 2019, the Swedish National Agency for Education among other measures proposes that the name of the knowledge area sex and cohabitation should be changed to sexuality and relationships, which provides a more accurate description of the knowledge area. The proposals emphasizes that education should promote the
health and well-being of all pupils and that the pupils should respect other people's bodily and personal integrity as well as strengthen the ability to make conscious and independent choices, contribute to an understanding of one's own and others' rights. An important change is that the school head's responsibility is clarified in the proposal.

In Sweden, the introductory chapters of the curricula have general formulations to not limit the content of the education. Instead of using the concept of honor-related violence and oppression, the Agency proposes formulations with a broader perspective so that other forms of structural violence and oppression are included. In addition to honor-related violence and oppression, other forms of structural violence, such as violence in close relationships and violence linked to different sexual identities are proposed to be introduced in the curricula.

For more information in Swedish please see: (U2018/02877/BS and U2018/02960/S) Uppdrag om förslag till ändringar i läroplaner avseende kunskapsområdet sex och samlevnad [13]

Improved syllabi

The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket [14]) wants to improve the syllabi in compulsory school (grundskolan [11]) and upper secondary school (gymnasieskolan [11]) and has presented proposals regarding how these improvements could be achieved.

Key elements of these proposals are:

- To emphasise factual knowledge more clearly in course and subject plans.
- To adapt the course and subject plans more clearly by stage, school form and teaching time or upper secondary school credits.
- To show the development of knowledge between the stages in the preschool and between the different upper secondary courses in a subject.
- To make the knowledge requirements less detailed.

The proposals have been developed based on a consultation with teachers, subject experts, researchers, interest organizations, trade unions and other authorities. Specific proposals for the new syllabi and knowledge requirements will be presented in 2019. If the changes enter into force, they could be applied from 2020.

Curricula changes for safety and study peace

Curricula changes aimed at increasing safety and study peace will enter into force on 1 July 2019. The Government has decided on changes to the curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre (Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet 2011 [15]), curriculum for the Sami school, the preschool class and the leisure-time centre (Läroplan för sameskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet 2011 [16]) and curriculum for the upper secondary school (Läroplan för gymnasieskolan 2011 [17]). The changes clarify the responsibility of the school head for security and study peace. The changes also emphasise that pupils should show respect and consideration for the school staff and other pupils. The changes are based on proposals in the School Commission's final report National Strategy for Improving Learning Outcomes and Equality (SOU 2017:35).

For more information about the proposals in Swedish with an English summary please see: (SOU 2017:35) Samling för skolan – Nationell strategi för kunskap och likvärdighet [18]
Technology for digital national tests

The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket [14]) is currently working with a government assignment to develop digital national tests in compulsory school and upper secondary school from 2017-2022. In January 2019 the agency published a list of the technical requirements that schools must have in place to fully implement digital national tests by 2022.

Examples of technical requirements that need to be in place:

- A stable internet connection that can handle sound and film material and allows all students in a school year or upper secondary course to do the tests.
- The school should have enough computers (portable or stationary) or tablets so that all students in a school year or upper secondary course can complete the tests simultaneously.
- Tablets should have a screen size of at least 9.6 inches.
- The computers and tablets should have a screen resolution of at least 1366 x 768.
- Headphones should be available for use in samples containing sound material.

The objective of the development of digital national tests is to increase pupils’ digital skills as well as contribute to ensuring that the national tests and the assessment becomes more equivalent, legal and effective.

The development is carried out in steps until the national tests will be fully digital in 2022.

2018

Increased movement in school

The government (regeringen [19]) has assigned The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket [20]) the task to submit proposals aimed at increasing movement during the school day for all students, in compulsory school (grundskolan [11]), education for pupils with severe intellectual impairments (särskolan [21]), schools for pupils with impaired hearing (specialskolan [21]) and the Sami school (sameskolan [21]). The National Agency for Education will also consider and, if necessary, submit proposals for increased movement in the preschool class (förskoleklassen [22]) and leisure-time centres (fritidshem [22]).

Examples of The Swedish National Agency for Education tasks as a part of this assignment are:

- To report on relevant research within the field and its impact on school results. Focus will be on pupils with a sedentary lifestyle, and if results differ between the sexes, age or other relevant circumstances.

- To describe how municipalities and other school organisers currently offer daily physical activity during the school day.

- To analyse which measures are needed to provide more students with mobility during the school day and submit proposals.

The final assignment report is to handed to the government by 31 January 2019.

National tests taken into account when grading pupils

In 2018 the Education Act (Skollagen [1]) was revised with an added rule that the national tests are to be taken into account when grading pupils. The pupils national test results are not to be the strongest determining factor but can be used as a support in grading. The Swedish National Agency for Education has updated the general advice document for teachers regarding grading.
Government grants for an equivalent school 2018

The government (regeringen [23]) has assigned The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket [14]) the task to allocate government grants to strengthen the equivalence and knowledge development within the preschool class and compulsory school during the autumn 2018. Municipal (kommuner [12]) and grant-aided independent (fristående skola [22]) school organisers of preschool class (förskoleklass [22]) and compulsory education (grundskola [11]) can apply for the grant to increase ongoing initiatives or develop new initiatives which strengthen equivalence and knowledge development. The government grant is supposed to finance initiatives based on the school organisers analysis of local needs. These initiatives can for example relate to the school organisers, schools, classrooms or continuing professional development for teachers and staff.

The total 2018 grant is at SEK 1 billion (approximately EURO 97 million) and can be used for the school organisers costs of initiatives between 1 July and 31 December 2018.

Mentor

As of July 1, 2019 all students in upper secondary school (gymansieskola [11] and gymnasiesärskola [24]) will have a mentor who will follow the student's development and educational journey. While most students already have a mentor today, the government wishes to further institutionalise this right across all schools.

Transitioning schools

As of July 1, 2018 schools will be required to ease a student's transition from one school to another by providing the new school with necessary documentation and information regarding the student so the transition is as smooth as possible. Information could, for example, be about the student's study support, educational development, study results, and other information relevant to the student's study situation.

Responsibility for monitoring absence

As of July 1, 2018 the school principal will have the ultimate responsibility for following up on students' absence from upper secondary school and its equivalent for students with learning disabilities (gymansieskola and gymnasiesärskola [11]) regardless of whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Reoccurring absence is a warning signal that the student may not be able to complete his or her education, so it is crucial that the reason for the student's absence is monitored and additional support provided where necessary. Read more about rules around school attendance here [25].

Increased support for students with disabilities

As of July 1, 2018 increased support will be available for students with disabilities in high school who are struggling to fulfil their educational requirements (gymnasieskola and gymnasiesärskola [11]). As opposed to mere adjustments, increased support refer more extensive measures such as private lessons, a reduced curriculum, or a specially designed schedule to meet the student's needs. Read more here [26].

Mandatory preschool class

The preschool class will be compulsory from the autumn 2018. All children living in Sweden will be required to attend the preschool class from the autumn the year they turn six. The school duty in
Sweden is thus extended by one year and becomes a ten-year duty.

More information [27].

Mandatory practical working experience in primary and special schools

The government has decided on mandatory practical working experience (praktisk arbetlivsorientering i skolan (PRAO)) in primary and special schools from the autumn 2018. The goal is to strengthen the link between school and working life. In elementary school, practical working experience must comprise at least ten days in total during grades 8 and 9. In the special school, the same extent applies to primary school but for students in grades 9 and 10.

Strengthening digital skills

The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket [14]) developed a proposal on how to strengthen digital skills in schools, including programming. The overall mission is to strengthen students’ digital skills and to prepare them for a changing society. The pupils should get an understanding of how digitalisation affects the individual and society. They should also be able to use and understand digital systems and services and relate to media and information in a critical and responsible manner. The curriculum has been revised to reinforce and clarify digital competences.

The changes apply from 1 July 2018.

More information in Swedish, please see here [28].

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