Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe

Sweden

2007/08
1. Responsibility and purpose

The Ministry of Education and Research in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture are responsible for setting the aims for the cultural and creative dimensions of education.

Decisions about the creation of the curriculum related to culture and creativity within education are made on central level as well as the creation of the arts curriculum. Decisions about the implementation of the arts curriculum are made on school level.

The Education Act, school curriculum, program objectives, course syllabi and grading criteria are some of the national steering documents that steer education activities. Part of the philosophy of the Swedish education system is that the state should define the national goals and guidelines for education, while detailed sub-regulation should be avoided to give municipalities and schools as much freedom as possible to organise their work and to interpret the steering documents.

The Swedish national curriculum states the goals for the student to attain for every subject but we have not one uniformed document for the aims of and the basic content in school. In Sweden these are separated into two different documents the curriculum (containing the aims), Lpo 94 and the syllabuses (containing the basic content of the subjects), Kursplaner, for every subject. Teachers have to take both of the documents (1) into consideration when they plan and carry out their work. As to shape and content of the lessons, the teachers hold the full autonomy and classes can vary in length according to decisions made at the school level.

The curriculum, Lpo 94, includes cultural and creative aims:

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‘The school should stimulate each pupil towards self-development and personal growth. It should focus not only on intellectual but also practical, sensual and aesthetic aspects. Health and lifestyle issues should also receive attention. Pupils should have the opportunity of experiencing the expression of knowledge in different ways. They should also be encouraged to try out and develop different modes of expression and experience feelings and moods. Drama, movement, dance, music and creativity in art, writing and design should all form part of the school’s activity. Harmonious development and education provides opportunities for exploring, researching, acquiring and representing different forms of knowledge and experiences. Creative ability is a part of what the pupils should acquire.’

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‘The school is responsible for ensuring that all pupils completing compulsory school: /…/'}

(1) Both documents can be found on the following link: http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/493/a/1303
• have developed their ability to express themselves creatively and become more interested in participating in the range of cultural activities that society has to offer,
• are familiar with central parts of our Swedish, Nordic and Western cultural heritages,
• have knowledge about the national minorities’ cultures, languages, religions and history,
• are able to develop and use their knowledge and experience in as many different forms of expression as possible covering language, pictures, music, drama and dance,
• have developed their understanding of other cultures.

2. Organisation and Aims of Arts Education

Swedish arts curriculum includes a combination of integrated and separated subjects.

The following art subjects make part of the curriculum:

• Music
• Crafts (i.e. Textiles and Wood- and metalwork)
• Arts
• Dance (integrated as a component in the subject called 'Physical education and health').
• Drama (integrated as a component in the subject Swedish)

The syllabuses for the different subjects in the Swedish compulsory school, containing the basic content of the different courses, can be found at the web site: http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/493/a/1303 (art p.7, music p. 35, crafts p. 77)

The study of arts is compulsory. The government has established the following schedule for the compulsory school. The schedule shows the guaranteed hours of teaching in every subject that the pupils are to receive during their nine years of compulsory school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home economics</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical education and health</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textiles and Wood- and metalwork</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>1490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography, History, Religion- and Civics (combined)</td>
<td>885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Technology (combined)</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language options</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student options</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total guaranteed hours of instruction | 6665
---|---
Whereof school option | 600

Time is allocated for all the nine years in compulsory school. It is up to the schools to decide how much of this time is allocated for a specific year. No yearly average can be indicated. However, in practice more time is allocated to arts subjects on ISCED 1 level than on ISCED 2.

'School option' has 600 hrs: The Compulsory School Ordinance states in chapter 2, 21 §, that this time should be used for 'teaching in one or more subjects'. This means that the 'school option', if the school so decides, may be a subject related to culture and art.

Thus almost 12% of the time in the Swedish compulsory school is devoted to arts. In some cases it could be more, depending on whether the school has a subject related to culture and art in its range of subjects in the 'school option'.

The teachers have a large freedom to decide the methods in teaching. Therefore, some cross-curricular links between arts and other subjects such as sciences could occur, but it is not regulated.

ICT is a part of the education and could be used in all subjects, but this is the responsibility of the school to organize this.

3. Special Provision on Arts Education

At compulsory school level, there are several schools with a defined music-, dance- or art profile.

The Ministry of Education and Research has no comprehensive national list of these schools and to what extent. Arts subjects are a part of the schedule.

There are special provisions regarding certain dance schools. Municipally run dance schools in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö and Piteå arrange preparatory dance education starting from school year 4. These schools may recruit pupils nationwide and may also deviate from the time schedule above. The National Agency for Education also issues special syllabuses in dance subjects for these schools.

The Education Act makes a distinction between permitted entrance requirements depending of if the school is municipally run or if it is an independent school. Independent schools are allowed to have certain entrance requirement in arts subjects, whereas the situation for municipally-run schools is not regulated by the Act. In practice, The National Schools Inspectorate has stated that municipal schools may test pupils that wish to enter schools or classes with a defined art profile as long as the municipality meets the requirement in the Education Act of when allocating pupils to different schools, comply with guardians’ wishes in so far as this is possible without neglecting other pupils’ justifiable claims to be placed in schools close to the home.

4. Assessment of Pupils' Progress and Monitoring of Standards in the Arts

4.1 Pupil assessment

The teacher's assessment on both levels (ISCED 1 and 2) consists of a judgement in relation to curricular content.

On ISCED 1 level (school years 1-7) the individual students’ development plan with the written assessments made by the teacher. In order to strengthen the individual follow up and improve the
information given to parents and pupils new regulations were introduced during 2008. The schools and teachers are obliged to establish written documentation of every pupil's attainment and development in each subject.

Teachers assess pupils in arts subjects on a formative/ongoing basis (to evaluate progress). Visual arts and music are assessed. Drama is part of the subjects 'music' and 'Swedish'. Dance is part of the subject Physical Education and Health. In order to strengthen the individual follow up and improve the information given to parents and pupils new regulations were introduced during 2008. The schools and teachers are obliged to establish written documentation of every pupil's attainment and development in each subject.

On ISCED 2 level (school years 8-9) assessment is expressed in end of term grades and finishing grades. Teachers assess pupils in arts subjects at the end of each semester or stage of education (summative assessment or final certification).

Visual arts and music are assessed. Drama is part of the subjects Music and Swedish. Dance is part of the subject Physical Education and Health. The pupils get term grades and finishing grades. The grades/marks are defined with the help of the goals that the pupils shall, in accordance to the syllabus, obtain in the compulsory schools and the grade criteria set for this subject. These criteria shall, in other words, be accomplished in order to obtain a certain grade/mark.

It is the obligation of the school to provide each student with the help he/she needs in order to reach the knowledge goals. If it becomes evident that a student is in need of special support measures it is the duty of the school head to see that these needs are met. Based on this the school head has to make sure that a plan is developed where it is stated how the needs of the student are to be fulfilled.

There are no external assessment in arts education.

4.2 Monitoring of standards

The Swedish National Agency for Education undertook, during spring 2003, the largest national evaluation of the compulsory school ever – the NU -03. The main goal was to provide an over all image of how the goals are reached in the compulsory school by subject, to indicate changes that are taking place since the last national evaluation and to indicate areas where improvements would be needed.

In the evaluation of Visual Arts, NAE found that most pupils (about 3 out of 4) find the subject interesting, but a large proportion of the pupils does not consider it a subject of importance for future studies or career. Girls enjoy the subject to a larger extent than boys do. They also receive higher marks in general. Many pupils (about 40 %) also expressed that it is difficult to get information about how assessment is done and what is required of them in order to obtain a certain mark.

In the evaluation of Music, NAE found that marks were highly correlated with the extent to which the pupils played music in their spare time. Thus, they concluded that a large part of the knowledge and skills assessed were obtained in other ways than through teaching in school. Pupils from academic and cultural backgrounds performed better in general. Girls were outperforming boys.
In the evaluation of Crafts, NAE found that, like with other Arts subjects, most pupils enjoyed the subject but did not consider it important for future studies or career. The subject is one of the most popular, and also the subject in which pupils to the largest extent experience that they can influence teaching and content. Even though Textile and Wood- and Metalwork jointly make up a subject, Crafts, with common goals, the subject is often taught as two separate subjects in which grouping based on gender is common. It is also common that marks are assessed based on the performance in just one of the two subject parts. However, most pupils found the assessment fair.

Based on this evaluation, the NAE has produced guides that can be used as a complement to the curriculum for the subjects Music, Visual Arts and Crafts (Textile and Wood- and metalwork). These guides include reports on practices.

The Agency makes a yearly co-ordinated evaluation of the development in early childhood care and education, school leisure centres, education for children, youth and adults.

This evaluation serves as a fact based decision making tool for the government on educational policies. It is also supposed to stimulate debate in local communities as well as in schools on how the quality of the educational system and the results can improve.

5. Teacher education in the arts

5.1 Initial teacher education

General teachers in the arts

It is up to schools to decide what subjects general teachers can teach on ISCED level 1 and 2. The teacher training institution decides on the curriculum for general teachers. These subjects are compulsory for general teacher education:

- Visual arts (including crafts)
- Music
- Drama
- Dance

Specialist or semi-specialist teachers in the arts

Each school decides on art subjects taught by specialist or semi-specialist teachers and on the requirements for teaching on levels ISCED 1 and 2.

Each teacher training institution is responsible for the curriculum for specialist or semi-specialist teachers.

Schools can also decide on the temporary participation of professional artist in teaching arts. Professional artists can not replace teachers.

5.2 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The employer decides on if development activities for general and specialist and semi-specialist teachers are to be organised.

CPD is not centrally regulated. The employer is responsible for organising CPD in arts for teachers.
6. Initiatives

The Ministry of Education and Research is organizing cooperation between the schools and ‘the cultural life’ together with the Ministry of Culture.

Since 2008 there is a government initiative aiming at integrating art and culture in secondary schools (ISCED level 2). Local school authorities may apply for grants by submitting an action plan describing long-term measures on how to incorporate arts and culture in schools and how to collaborate with the cultural sphere. The grant is administrated by the Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs, and can be used to bring professional artists to schools in order to demonstrate and guide pupils in their creative work. It can also be used for cultural excursions or for workshops in collaboration with cultural institutions.

Creative Schools is intended to become an integral part of school activities. The purpose of the grant is to make culture part of learning at school. The cultural initiatives should have a long-term impact on the personal development of the students and on their education. The initiatives can be successful pedagogical tools for achieving increased knowledge and a good school environment. But above all, Creative Schools is about the growth of the students. Cultural experiences can put feelings, existential questions and a complicated world into words. However, encountering culture can also bring pure joy and inspiration.

Successful plans of action can be found in the schools across the country. One creative school involves a close co-operation between the subjects Swedish, music and arts with the local library. The aim is to make the students more accustomed to the library environment, to regularly borrow music, fiction and non-fiction books. Through co-operation with local artists, the students are taught different techniques and during music class they are able to try different instruments and styles of music.

The purpose of this school is to create the opportunity of contact between school, students and the local sphere, as well as developing the teachers and students ability to express emotions, knowledge and experience in ways other than the school would normally do.

Another school focus their cultural work on the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, more so on article 13 which states the freedom of speech and freedom to partake in information. This right entails independence of territorial boundaries, to seek, receive and spread information and thoughts, in speech, writing or print, in artistic forms or through other choices of expression that the children see fit. The school is a social and cultural meeting point with the possibility as well as the responsibility to strengthen that right for anybody who works there. The school works for this in various ways: novel writing, themes of the native district as well as extra lessons in music for those who are interested.

A third school focuses on literature, naming each class room after a Swedish author, creating a literary canon.

There are music and culture schools offering extra-curricular activities consisting of music, dance, drama, media, arts and is offered initially to children and youths. The organisation is open to everyone and is voluntary. The organisation often takes place in primary schools after the school day is over. There are no admission examinations. Music and culture schools unite broad basic activities with occupational preparing.

The pedagogues have university degrees or corresponding competence within each art form. Music and culture schools integrate different art forms in education, preserve and develop our
cultural heritage and supports new cultural expressions. Music and culture schools are primarily funded by official means but can also be partly financed by fees, sponsorship and other forms of revenues.

The municipal school of music exists in 283 municipalities. Only seven municipalities in the country lack music and/or cultural school. The organisation includes 190 000 children and youths. The term fee varies from 0-1 700 SEK with an average of 575 SEK. More girls than boys participate in the activities of music and culture schools.

7. Ongoing reforms and Proposals

As from the autumn of 2008: in order to strengthen the individual follow up and improve the information given to parents and pupils new regulations were introduced during 2008. The schools and teachers are obliged to establish written documentation of every pupil's attainment and development in each subject.

8. Existing national surveys and reports on practices

No information available (see 4.2)

Unrevised English.

The content is under the responsibility of the Eurydice National Unit.

Author: joint efforts

For detailed information on the educational system and teacher education, please see Eurybase on [www.eurydice.org](http://www.eurydice.org)