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Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

SWEDEN

Academic year 2007/08

Education is compulsory for 9 years for children between the ages of 7 and 16. If the parents wish, a child may begin school one year earlier, at the age of 6. Compulsory education is organised in a single-structure *(Grundskola)*. Almost all compulsory school pupils (98 %) continue straight on to upper secondary schools (3 years) which offer 17 nationally determined programmes aiming at a broad-based general education, 13 of which have a more vocational orientation.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The overall national goals for compulsory education are set out by the Swedish Parliament and Government in the Education Act, the Curriculum for the Compulsory School System, the Preschool Class and the Leisure-time Centre (Lpo94) and course syllabi for compulsory school.

On the basis of these goals, every municipality is required to set out the general objectives for its schools in a school plan *(skolplan)* adopted by the Municipal Council.

Each school is required to establish a local work plan *(arbetsplan)* based on the national goals and the municipal school plan. The work plan should define issues that are not determined in the national documents, i.e. course content, organisation and teaching methods.

The Education Act *(Skollagen 1985)* regulates who can be hired as a counsellor within the Swedish school system.

Actions are taken to improve Swedish guidance. Since 2006, a major research project called 'Career choice and guidance' has been under way. It is based on a network of researchers from the universities in Sweden that offer a bachelor's degree in career counselling. This network aims, among others, at identifying urgent research areas and initiating research on career development and counselling. In 2007, the government gave the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement the task to support municipalities in their work in developing quality in vocational and educational guidance. This task will be completed in 2008. The Agency is working with specially chosen pilot municipalities that can act as good examples for others. Sweden also joined the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network in 2007, and the Ministry of Education has chosen to get involved in terms of support for policy development and implementation at national level.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for comprehensive education (http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/2063).

Sweden has a very decentralised system for decision-making, and there is no central organisation which coordinates or governs guidance activities. This is done on a local or regional basis. The local municipal authorities plan their guidance and counselling services separately, in line with appropriation documents (kind of documents with which the work of the public service is directed, for example the budget appropriation) and school curricula. Financing of guidance services is part of the total funding for the local municipality, and is not specifically designated.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

The *grundskola* must provide educational and vocational guidance (syo). There are no compulsory lessons in career education, but counsellors working in the school occasionally provide lessons/information sessions both in comprehensive school and secondary school, most often at times when pupils have to make career choices.

The Curriculum for the Compulsory School System (Lpo94) states that:

‘The teacher should support individual students in their choice of further education and help establish contacts with schools that will be receiving the pupils as well as organisations, companies and others who can help enrich the school’s activities and establish it in the community.’

‘Student guidance counsellors and vocational guidance staff or staff performing equivalent tasks should inform and guide pupils prior to the next stage of their education and vocational orientation and focus particularly on the opportunities for pupils with disabilities as well as assist the training and vocational guidance efforts of other members of staff.’

The school head should ensure that ‘cooperation with schools and working life outside school are developed so that pupils have concrete experiences which will be important when making choices regarding further education and vocational orientation,’ and that ‘educational and vocational activities are organised in such a way that pupils receive guidance before choosing between the possibilities offered by the school and before their further education.’

Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum

The aim of the work experience programme, or PRAO *(praktisk arbetslivsorientering)*, is to give the pupils tangible experiences with working life and to give them an opportunity to grow. The two weeks of PRAO also gives pupils an important opportunity to form an opinion of different vocations and training/educational programmes. All pupils in the 8th year visit employment sites in the area to gain some understanding of what is involved in various professions. Vocational guidance is stressed in the final 9th year, during which PRAO may be extended and students may work for three to six weeks in a factory, office or other locations. The educational and vocational guidance counsellors give lessons to inform every class about the purpose of PRAO and about the principle of selection for the trainee posts, and provide them with practical details. In Gotland, for example, the trainee posts are mediated by the Central Agency for Trainee Job Acquisition at the Local Department of Education.

OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

Contacts with the professional world

These contacts are determined by local authorities and schools and vary from one school to another.

Guidance services at school

The types and number of support and guidance staff are not centrally regulated; each school is responsible for employing the staff they need. In larger *grundskola*, *gymnasieskola* and schools for municipal adult education *(kommunal vuxenutbildning)*, there is usually an educational and vocational counsellor *(studie- och yrkesvägledare (syokonsulent))*. These counsellors inform classes of pupils and their parents about the content of the different upper secondary programmes and about the purpose of upper secondary school education. Most pupils in the 9th year have personal interviews with their counsellor about their future plans and their choice of programme in upper secondary school. Many pupils also meet their counsellor before beginning their work experience in the 8th and 9th year.

Since the 2003/04 academic year, data have been collected on all educational and vocational guidance counsellors. In autumn 2005, there were 984 active educational and vocational guidance counsellors in compulsory schools, 73 % of whom were women. This means that there was one full-time post per 500 pupils in years 7-9 in municipal schools, and just over one full-time post per 1 000 pupils in independent schools. 64 % of educational and vocational guidance counsellors in municipal schools were professionally qualified, and 31 % were professionally qualified in independent schools.

Guidance services outside school

Some smaller municipalities have a central **guidance or information centre** instead of offering guidance in each school. They are often the result of cooperation with a local labour market office.

Career fairs are arranged regularly in different parts of Sweden. They are often organised jointly by local employers and upper secondary schools, and target pupils in the ninth year and in upper secondary school. Examples are the yearly Regional Educational and Vocational Fair of Gotland (http://www.framtidsdagen.se/) and the big student fairs organised by SACO, the trade union confederation of independent professional associations (http://www.valjayrke.se/sacomassan/utlandska_utstallare/startsida_utlandska.htm).

QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

In the schools

A professionally qualified counsellor is a university-trained specialist. A school-leaving certificate *(slutbetyg från gymnasieskolan)* is required for admission to the training, with a passing grade in social sciences and at least one year of work experience. The training is offered at three universities (Malmö, Stockholm, Umea) and consists of a three-year course leading to a guidance counsellor degree (*studie-och yrkesvägledarexamen*, or bachelor of education in career education). Guidance counsellors (as well as teachers) are recruited by

schools through open procedures and are employed by the municipality on a permanent contract.

Opportunities for ongoing training are available to guidance counsellors. Some municipalities in Sweden arrange regular information meetings on current topics of interest for practitioners. Two good examples are:

- *Lärarfortbildning AB* (Further Training for Teachers) is a company that has been given the task by the municipality of Stockholm to arrange regular thematic conferences for guidance professionals, approximately seven times/year. The action is called *Vägledarkalendariet* (Guidance counsellor calendar) – http://www.lararforbundet.se/web/lfort.nsf?OpenDatabase.
- The Skåne Association of Local Authorities (Skåne is in the south of Sweden and consists of 33 municipalities) organises *Vägledarkompetensen* (Guidance Counsellor Competence), whereby conferences and study visits in Sweden and Denmark are arranged each year (http://www.kfsk.se/vagledarkompetensen/).

In other guidance services

Educational and vocational guidance counsellors may be found in schools, employment offices, colleges and universities, rehabilitation centres and in private and public work organisations.

Sveriges Vägledarförening, the Swedish Association of Guidance Counsellors (SAGC) coordinates approximately 1 800 Swedish guidance practitioners:
http://www.vagledarforeningen.org/

För vägledare (For Guidance Counsellors) is a section of the *Skolverket* website *Utbildningsinfo*, developed especially for guidance practitioners in order to support them in their daily work.

Studie- och yrkesvägledarna inom Lärarnas Riksförbund, *LR* is a forum for educational and vocational counsellors within the National Union of Teachers:
http://forening.proventek.net/vagledarna/

Euroguidance Sweden (the Swedish National Resource Centre for Guidance) provides a range of services to practitioners and other professionals in the field of guidance:
http://www.programkontoret.se/euroguidance

COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Under the Co-determination Act, Teachers' and other employees' organisations are entitled to information about, participation in and influence over impending decisions. Student rights to determination are enshrined in the Education Act *(Skollag)*, but their practical implementation is determined locally. Parental and student influence in the management of schools is enhanced by participation on local school boards (www.sweden.se).

An example of cooperation is the work experience website http://www.praktikplatsen.se to connect pupils, teachers and employers, matching supply and demand. The project is owned

and operated by the Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities, a cooperative organisation uniting 13 municipalities in western Sweden.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Internet references

http://www.utbildningsinfo.se – a *Skolverket* (Swedish National Agency for Education) website for students, parents and professionals in the field of education. The site is a source for collected, current and neutral information about education in Sweden, which is financed or supervised/monitored by the state. The website contains a search tool for education in Sweden, a web-based career guidance tool, a description of the Swedish school system, a personal folder, a special section for guidance practitioners, and *Välj och Planera* (Choose and Plan), a web-based career guidance programme. This programme contains different tools such as pedagogical texts, exercises and examples in a well-structured matrix, and it raises awareness about different issues that are important in a career choice. The programme can be used independently or with the assistance of a career counsellor.

http://www.syoguiden.com/ – Sweden's largest portal on studies and work in Sweden and abroad.

http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/ – the website of the Public Employment Service, also offering information for jobseekers.

www.avstamp-nu – the Public Employment Service's inspiration site, offering young persons jobseeking hints, an interview simulator and an interactive CV creator.

www.nystartsjobb.se – information for employers and jobseekers.

Contact information of the different municipalities can be found on the website of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions:
http://www.skl.se/startpage_en.asp?C=6390

Contact information of guidance counsellors in schools around Sweden can be found on the websites of each individual school. Search tool for schools in Sweden: http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/244

https://www.studera.nu/ – provides information on higher education and careers.

http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/go.aspx?C=223 – the Swedish Public Employment Service (sorting under the national Labour Market Administration) – vacancies for jobseekers and vocational guidance information.

Sources

1. Euroguidance Sweden. The National Recourse Centre for guidance in Sweden. http://www.programkontoret.se/euroguidance
2. Educational and Vocational Guidance and Counselling in Gotland, Sweden, 2004. http://www.tjelvar.org/framtid/vagledning_E.htm
3. Eurybase; Eurydice.

4. Cedefop review of career guidance policies – report on Sweden, 2002. http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects_Networks/Guidance/Career_Guidance_survey/national_responses.asp

5. ETV and Cedefop thematic analysis 'Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment'. www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_ressources/NationalVet/Thematic

6. *Skolverket*, the Swedish National Agency for Education: http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/190 (English) & report 283 *Descriptive data on pre-school activities, school-age childcare, schools and adult education in Sweden 2006*.