



The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

Gender segregation in the labour market and education

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Gender segregation in the labour market and education in Sweden

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1. Introduction and relevant country context

Sweden has a relatively long history of measures to break up gender segregation in education and in the labour market. In this paper it is only possible to present some of these efforts. Already in the Curriculum for Compulsory Schools 1969 (Lgr 69) it was stated that schools should further gender equality (Wernersson 2013 p. 151). In 1980, an Equal Opportunities Ombudsman and legislation concerning gender equality was introduced. The aim of the legislation is to protect persons against gender discrimination at work, in school and university or college among other things. The task also includes furthering gender equality in these areas. Since 2006, the objective of gender equality policy in Sweden is that women and men are to have the same power to shape society and their own lives. There are four objectives: Equal division of power and influence; Equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care; Men's violence against women must stop and Economic equality, which is the most important sub-goal in this context, and means that women and men must have the same opportunities and conditions as regards education and paid work which give economic independence throughout life.

The drive to open up traditional male occupations for women started seriously in 1972, when the Delegation for Gender Equality between Men and Women was appointed by the Government (Gender School, 2007). In the beginning of the 1980s, the Ministry of Employment ran a campaign in order to stimulate girls' interest for technology and increase women's possibilities to advance. Towards the end of the 1980s, the Parliament decided on a special programme for gender equality in working life. The main responsibility to break up the gender segregation in the labour market during the 1990s laid on the Labour Market Agency (*Arbetsmarknadsverket*). From the budget year 1993/94 the Agency received around SEK 30 million (around EUR 3 million) per year for "Break projects" (*Brytprojekt*) aimed at breaking up the gender segregation in the labour market. Written material from almost 500 Break projects carried out between 1993 and 2005 was collected and examined and a report was published in 2007.

In 2003, a Delegation for Gender Equality in Preschool was appointed. The main aim was to emphasise, strengthen and develop gender equality work in preschools, which included both increased gender-awareness and more men to preschool. The official report was published in 2006. In 2004, a report about gender segregation in the labour market was published. It showed that gender segregation decreased somewhat during the 1990s, mainly as a result of the fact that the share of women increased in many male-dominated occupations demanding higher education, while the share of men in female-dominated occupations hardly increased at all (SOU 2004:43). This tendency has continued until today. Measures to break the gender segregation in the labour market have mainly been aimed at broadening girls' and women's educational and occupational choices, while few measures have been aimed at inducing boys and men to enter female-dominated occupations.

During the period 2007-2014 the Government allocated SEK 2.6 billion (around EUR 0.265 billion) on measures to further gender equality (Riksrevisionen 2015 p. 9), which was about ten times as much per year as earlier. More than half of the resources (54 %) were used to stop men's violence against women and 28 % to economic gender equality. In 2008, the Delegation for Gender Equality in School was appointed. The task was to bring out and develop knowledge about gender equality in school by analysing gender differences in educational results and survey areas where new knowledge about gender and gender equality was needed. The Delegation published their findings in an official report in 2010 (SOU 2010:99). In 2009, the Delegation for Gender Equality in the Universities was appointed. The aim was to support and propose measures to further gender equality and to pay attention to and reduce the gender restricted choices in education. The Delegation allocated SEK 47 million (EUR 4.79 million) to 37 different projects. The final report was published in 2011 (SOU 2011:1). In 2015, the Delegation for Gender Equality in Working Life presented their report (SOU 2015:50). They do not propose any measures in order to break up the gender-segregated labour market. The measures recommended concern parental leave, working time, work environment, wages, etc.

1.1. Men in preschools

Since 1995, local authorities in Sweden are requested by law to provide childcare to all children aged between 1 and 12 years whose parents are working or studying, or children in need of special support. Since the beginning of the 2000s, also children with parents on parental leave with another child, as well as unemployed parents have this right. Parental leave is longer than one year, therefore no children below the age of one are in preschool, and only about half of the children between one and two years. Of children aged 2-5 years between 90 % and 96 % are in preschools. Around 85 % of the children 6-8 years old are in after-school-care, and 77 % of the 9-year-olds, while the share is much smaller for older children (Skolverket 2015a and 2015b). Childcare services are mainly paid by taxes, beside parental fees, but can be organised by private companies, parental cooperatives, religious organisations, etc.

1983 was a top year as far as men working in preschools is concerned, with a rate of 4.6 %. The lowest share is found in 1998, namely 1.9 % (Nordberg 2011). However, since the number of persons employed in preschools is much higher today than earlier, the absolute number of men in childcare is bigger today. In 2014, the share of men of the employed working with children in preschools was 4 %. Men are overrepresented as heads of preschools, recreational pedagogues, persons with teacher training education, some pedagogical training and no education for working with children, while they are underrepresented among preschool teachers and persons with secondary education to work with children (Skolverket 2015c). The share of men in preschools is significantly higher in big cities. The share of men is higher in after-school-care, 23 % (Skolverket 2015d). Men are overrepresented in private leisure-time centres and slightly also as managers (26 %). Men have partly other educational backgrounds than women. They have to a higher extent an education as recreation leader, other pedagogical education and other, while they are underrepresented among those with a preschool teacher education.

Childcare is a very female-dominated area. However, already in the middle of the 1960s a discussion started whether men should be able to work in childcare (SOU 2004:115 p. 42ff). In the 1970s, there were clear political ambitions to increase the share of men in childcare. This was done among other things by quota-based

admission for men in teacher-training education (Nordberg 2011). However, this had very little effect and was abolished in 1981.

A survey and analysis were carried out in 2012 of measures to increase the number of men in preschools since the 1970s (Skolverket 2012). Besides quotas for men to vocational training at the university, there have also been courses to prepare unemployed men for work in preschools and networks for men in education or employed in female-dominated occupations. There are also examples of preschools where a section of the preschool only employs men. Young men in secondary school are offered jobs in childcare in the summer. This might be important since the municipalities offered as many as 80,000 pupils summer jobs (SKL 2015a). In the Budget Bill for 2002 the Government allocated SEK 12 million (EUR 1.22 million) aimed at staff in preschools, after-school-care, mandatory and secondary school. The aim was that there should be a so-called gender pedagogue in all municipalities. They are to work with gender equality questions in the pedagogical practice in order to raise quality (SOU 2006:75). The National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) has been allocated SEK 1.3 million (EUR 130,000) in 2013 and 2014 in order to map and analyse measures to increase the number of men in preschools. The drive includes conferences and presentation of good examples of work in order to increase interest for preschool teacher education and to work as preschool teachers and child minders in preschools (Prop 2013/14:1). However, not all the resourced allocated to this area were used (Statskontoret 2015).

1.2. Women in STEM

Nine years of schooling is mandatory in Sweden, but most students also complete upper secondary school. Technology is a subject in mandatory school which both boys and girls study. Girls have better grades than boys in Technology. In secondary school there are 18 national programmes: 12 vocational programmes and 6 higher education preparatory programmes. The vocational programmes are more gender-segregated than the preparatory programmes, which provide a foundation for further education in higher education. In 2011/12 women constituted 48 % of the students leaving upper secondary school having completed education in Natural Science, an increase from 42 % in the year 2000. The corresponding share in Technology was 21 %, an increase from 10 % in 2003. Technology was introduced as a special subject in 2000 (Statistisk årsbok 2005 och 2014).

Since the end of the 1970s, the number of women in the universities is higher than the number of men and this tendency has been reinforced. Of the number of university degrees women took 64 % and men 36 % in 2011/12 (Statistisk årsbok 2014 Table 22.25). Of the registered students in Natural Science, 44 % are women. However, in Pharmacy (75 %), Biology (63 %), Geoscience (54 %) and Chemistry (53 %) women are in majority, while men dominate in Physics (70 %), Mathematics (66 %) and Agriculture and Forestry (56 %). Of the registered students in Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction 34 % are women. Men are in majority in all different fields except Architecture where women are in majority (57 %). Computer Technology and Electro Technology (both 78 %) are the most male-dominated. Of the doctoral degrees, men took 62 % in Natural Sciences and 73 % in Engineering and Technology.

In the Budget Bill for 1985, SEK 3 million (EUR 0.31 million) was allocated for courses in technology for girls in form 8 and 9 in compulsory school (SOU 2004:43). The aim was to increase young women's interest for natural science and technology and to strengthen their self-confidence in these fields. The municipalities have since

then arranged courses for girls in technology, mainly in the summer. Until 1994, only girls who had finished form 8 and 9 could participate. But since then, summer courses have been arranged for both younger girls (aged 8-12) and young women in secondary school. In the beginning of 2000s, around 2,000 girls per year participated and around 120 municipalities (out of 290) applied for resources (Skolverket 2004).

The National Agency for Education (Skolverket) has received SEK 151.8 million (around EUR 15.5 million) to increase the interest for STEM for the period 2007-2014. Hundreds of projects have been carried out, among them 95 summer courses in Technology for girls with altogether more than 1,000 participants. An example is Innovatum Science Centre's annual summer course for girls around 15 years old. The course is one week and contains study visits, meetings with female role models and self-confidence training. The Government decided in 2008 to appoint a delegation with the task to survey the need for well-educated labour in mathematics, natural science and ICT and to emphasise and develop measures to increase the interest for participating in university education within these areas. In 2009, the Delegation for Technology presented about 240 different projects aimed at students and teachers, events, festivals, competitions, discovery centers, and technological museums. About 16 of those projects were especially aimed at girls (Teknikdelegationen 2009). The Government has also given the National Agency for Education the task to make an agreement with the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences (IVA) with the aim to administer and carry out a drive for trainee posts for young people in the technology sector, the so called "Technological Leap" (Tekniksprånget) during 2012-2016. The programme has been allocated SEK 100 million (EUR 10.2 million). 450 instructors have been trained (60 % men and 40 % women). The trainees should be less than 21 years old. They receive a monthly salary of SEK 13,500 (EUR 1,375). Until 2015, 7,000 young people have applied and 1,600 have been allocated trainee posts. 40 % of those who apply are women.

An example from working life is the ÅF Group, a technical consulting company that started a campaign – the Ladies Month – in order to recruit female engineers. In September 2014 only women were to be employed and the goal was to employ 120 female engineers. In 2015, October has been designated as Ladies Month. The initiative came from a former Minister for Gender Equality, Nyamko Sabuni. She is now working as manager for sustainability in the ÅF group and her job is to build a company culture which is characterised by gender equality and diversity.

2. Policy debate

2.1. More men in childcare

Despite big changes in society and in the gender order since the 1970s the share of men in childcare has not increased. Important obstacles for increasing the number of men in preschools are low wages and sometimes lack of full-time employment. Preschool and young children are marked as areas for women. Men who work there are breaking the norms of what men should do and thereby risk being questioned as "real men". Paradoxically one argument for more men in preschool is that ("real") men contribute with "male" qualities and activities. If men accept this and are assigned such tasks gender stereotypes are reinforced rather than challenged. Additionally it contributes to maintaining the low share of men in preschool since many men feel that they cannot or will not live up to these expectations and therefore leave or do not enter such occupations. Men do not want to be

discriminated in favour or singled out. They want to participate in children's learning and contribute to the work in preschool on the same premises as other employees (Heikkilä 2015a). Additionally it means that the employed women in preschools do not have the special qualities which are expected of the men. The idea contains both criticism of the women in preschools and their work and a view that women and men are different in relation to children.

An obstacle for men to work with small children, which was not mentioned at all in the 1970s, is the risk for suspicion of pedophilia. Many male preschool teachers feel uncomfortable just by the risk of being suspected and when such cases are revealed, men in preschools feel questioned and some leave childcare.

The Delegation for Gender Equality in Preschool (SOU 2006:75) underlines that an equal number of women and men does not automatically result in gender equality. Gender is a social construction which means that both masculinity and femininity are changeable. Pedagogical ability and gender awareness are the most important qualifications to further gender equality in preschool. It is also important that women and men share all tasks and activities which take place in everyday work in preschool. The most important argument for a greater share of men in preschool is that it is part of a general struggle to break the gender-segregated labour market. It is important to broaden girls' and boys' and women's and men's tasks and areas of responsibility in order to reach a more equal distribution of power and resources between the sexes. Another argument is that men are needed in preschool in order to show both adults and children that both women and men are able to work with children, care and pedagogy. It is about broadening men's tasks and areas of responsibility and challenges the view that men cannot do such things as women do. Lately an additional argument has been brought forward; broader recruitment is a solution for future need of competent employees (SKL 2015b).

Focus for greater gender equality in Swedish preschools has not primarily been a gender equal representation among the employed. It has rather been aimed at removing obstacles in terms of preschool employees' preconceived conceptions about femininity and masculinity from forming the children.

2.2. Women in STEM

The share of women in STEM has increased over the years and in some areas of natural science, women are actually in majority. In technology men are in majority in all different areas except architecture. Whether this has anything to do with all the different measures in order to increase the share of women in STEM is not possible to know. It might be part of a general tendency among women to enter traditionally male-dominated occupations demanding higher education. Women are today in majority in several traditionally male-dominated fields of education such as chemistry, architecture, psychology, medicine, law, economy, etc. More women in STEM is still on the agenda, especially to bring women to the IT-sector (Regeringskansliet 2011), and there are networks for female engineers etc., but in the last ten years or so the gender segregation discussion in Sweden has changed focus to increasing women in management positions and women as entrepreneurs. Women's underrepresentation in these areas is seen as problematic both from an equitable and an efficiency point of view. Women might miss out on a good career and it might be a loss for working life, that cannot recruit the best and they can be women as well as men. The arguments are the same in STEM.

3. Transferability aspects

Denmark

If using the lens of the Delegation for Gender Equality in Preschool – as I read their report – I believe that “I do the same but in a different way” (Skanderborg) and “Professionalism as a strategy for recruitment and retention” (Fredensborg) would be endorsed by the Delegation as the projects are about multiple ways of being a pedagogue, rising gender awareness among staff and children and placing the profession in the centre and set aside gender in terms of being a feature.

The project “Forest man” (Hjørring) in the initial version would probably not be accepted by the Delegation since in their view it would reinforce gender stereotypes. However, this was challenged also in Denmark, the project changed course and female pedagogues acted as forest persons. This later version would be approved by the Delegation.

In the project “A man at any price” (Aalborg) one male pedagogue moved between seven kindergartens in Aalborg municipality, where only 4 % of the day-care staff were men. The Delegation would probably not favour such a project, since they believed that rather than spreading male staff around it is better to place them together in one section or at least together with another man.

The Netherlands

To transfer the Dutch STEM project is probably not a problem, since the general policy framework of the STEM project in the Netherlands seems to be very similar to the projects in Sweden. The STEM stimulation policy for girls and women at different levels of education covering not only students but also parents and teachers and include raising awareness of gender biases seems to be very analogous to Swedish projects. The difference might be the role of VHTO, an expert organisation on girls/women and science and technology in the Netherlands.

Northern Ireland

The aim of the project from Northern Ireland is to improve the gender balance in STEM through involving the target group in the development of resources and support networks to share and build on good practices. I do not believe it would be a problem to transfer this project to Sweden. As far as I know, there is no such project particularly aimed at STEM on a national level in Sweden, however in several universities and other organisations such projects are taking place. There are though several similar initiatives on a national level aimed at increasing the number of women among board members, in management positions and as entrepreneurs. One such example from the private sector is the Swedish Corporate Governance Code, which in 2014 announced a number of initiatives to improve the gender balance on the boards of directors of listed companies.

4. Recommendations for action

More men in childcare

The Delegation for Gender Equality in Preschool proposed among other things that resources should be allocated to summer courses in childcare and pedagogy for boys similar to Technology for girls; that men employed in preschools could be role-models for men studying pedagogy and to avoid placing male trainees in preschools where there are no men; to strive to place at least two men in one section rather than spreading them out on different sections; and follow up and carry through education of gender pedagogues.

Mia Heikkele (2015b), who has researched extensively about men in preschools, recommends

- A greater number of trainee posts for men in preschools, together with clear routines which are communicated and followed up.
- Training about gender and sex to those who distribute trainee post.
- Training of study and vocational guidance counsellors.
- Continued conversations and discussions about gender equality and gender in preschool and society.
- A clearer standpoint from all heads of schools as far as the question of paedophilia is concerned.
- Work to change the view of the content of the occupation of preschool teacher where the pedagogical part is emphasised

Gender equality projects in general

Resources allocated to gender equality measures attract attention and give legitimacy to gender equality and start activities that would otherwise not take place, but the activities risk losing speed or altogether disappear when there are no more resources.

Gender equality projects are often a result of temporary resources, and outside usual planning. This means that they are irregular and short-term. Such projects are seldom successful; especially not if they are aimed at influencing strongly gender marked education and occupational patterns.

The presence of real enthusiasts gives the question attention but it is not enough to create a long-term perspective in the work. Successful gender equality work needs knowledge, commitment and responsibility shared by many in the organisation.

The projects need to be followed up and the results evaluated in order to gain knowledge and thereby be able to adapt, develop and improve future measures.

Gender equality projects should be part of core activities, of ordinary work and in the ordinary budget and have a long-term perspective in order to have any effects.

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