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THE SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE

The ideas underlying the Swedish national reform of upper-secondary education 2011

In the article reveals an idea of the school of the future, describe different aspects of the Swedish New Reform. Special attention is paid to the description of the 5Qs Model which incorporates essential and multidimensional attributes, missing in other models.

School and Society

Schools recognizing that education is not only a service industry, but also a place where knowledge is «made», preserved; a critical thinking place reflecting on



society, etc. Involving pupils in producing the knowledge, development and evaluation of the education process provides instructors with great understanding and direct insight into relevant issues of pupil learning and knowledge management. As every aspect in global environment changes, school education changes too as a response to what happens in the world at large. The type, content and volume of knowledge are strongly affected in a society that is undergoing change at all levels. The political, economical, social and technological factors in a society are impacting the education systems, needed knowledge and labor market requirements. Fast changes in the dynamic political and economic environment and processes are increasing demands on people's level of knowledge, innovation and communication. Labor market, family life and working life requires people with flexibility and new kinds of skills and competence.

Such constant changes create a need for schools to be flexible in the content and objectives of their curricula and teaching methods. Thus, the role of schools is to

meet the requirements of future professional knowledge and communication skills. The task of schools is also to provide a solid tools for personal development and tools for understanding of cultural heritage and democratic values. One of Swedish challenge is that in 2009 approx 10% of the Swedish pupils who have completed compulsory school does not qualify for the national program in upper secondary school because of their incomplete final grades. The Swedish government introduced a new reform of upper-secondary education, with its use of nationally established objectives as a part of the general decentralization that has been occurring in Swedish society (Lundgren, 2011; Zineldin, et al 2011).

In principle, all young people in Sweden (99 per cent) start upper secondary school after compulsory school. The problem is that the knowledge targets are not being adequately met. To improve this situation and to meet the global labor market challenges, the Swedish Government revised its education policy.

Thus, the years 2011 and 2012 will be two of the most reform intensive years in Swedish education history. The new national reform of upper-secondary education system in Sweden provides the schools and their staff with greater freedom, autonomy of taking actions and a significantly increased level of influence over their own work and decisions (Lundgren, 2011; Government offices of Sweden, 2011).

The Swedish New Reform

Some new Measures, Policy direction and reform ambitions

2007-2010

Under the period 2007-2010 the Government initiated and carried out the following measures in the period to improve various parts of the education system (Government offices of Sweden, 2011):

- 1) a new teacher training program;
- 2) a new Education Act;
- 3) the creation of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate;
- 4) the introduction of teacher certification;

- 5) a reorientation of the Swedish compulsory school with well-defined knowledge requirements and earlier follow-up; and
- 6) a new higher vocational education.

2010-2014 (A knowledge nation)

The Swedish Government has intention to continue the reform of the school system to increase the level of student knowledge. To achieve this goal, the government is investing approx 1 billion Euro for the in the period 2010-2014 (Government offices of Sweden, 2011).

According to Government offices of Sweden (2011), in the new Education Act:

- 1) students' right for individual support has been strengthened and follow-up;
- 2) introducing a requirement of a written assessments, earlier grades and more national tests;
- 3) introducing new methods to improve students' basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic;
- 4) raise standards in schools in disadvantaged areas beginning in 2012.

Starting from autumn 2011, a fundamental reform of the upper secondary school will be carried out. Requirements for admission to a national program will be tightened so that students are better prepared for their studies and thus have better chances of completing their education in normal time The main goals are:

- to get more students to finalize and leave upper secondary school with pass grades
- to strengthen students' skills in preparation for working life or further studies and
- better adapt the education program to the requirements of different sectors and occupational areas.

Vocational Education and the New Reform

According to Government offices of Sweden (2011), to help students to finish their studies with satisfactory results and grades, more time will be spent teaching subjects with a direct link to the main aim of the studies; for example, students in a vocational program will study more vocational subjects and less time will be spent on theoretical courses.

To get more time for vocational subjects, the vocational program in the new upper secondary school will not automatically provide eligibility for higher education. However, all students have the right to study for basic eligibility for higher education, either while they are studying in the vocational program or later in adult education.

The individual program will be abolished and replaced with five introductory programs better suited to students' individual needs, wishes and potential.

- 1) preparatory training;
- 2) program-oriented individual choice;
- 3) introductory vocational training;
- 4) individual alternative and introductory;
- 5) language training.

Under the new Education Act, students have the right to receive the needed support to meet the stricter education targets.

Teacher Skills and Competence

The new act stress the importance of strengthen teachers' skills and competence as well as improve the status of the teaching profession. Some measures are:

- A reform of teacher training to improve standards in schools.
- A professional certification for teachers and pre-school teachers has been introduced with the aim of improving the status of the teaching profession.
- Graduates (future teachers) must have successfully completed an introductory period with good recommendations in order to become certified.

➤ A requirement that teachers be qualified in the subject they teach has been tightened.

New Curricula:

➤ Introduction of new curricula and syllabuses is very important measure to improve the entire quality of the education.

➤ New requirement for written assessments from grade 1, grades in earlier years and in several stages will be started from 2012.

➤ More national tests to better evaluate students' knowledge.

➤ More and extra support for needing pupils needing

➤ Summer schools initiative.

Starting from 2012 the following measures will be considered:

➤ An evaluation function for education policy reforms and results.

➤ Strengthen teaching in mathematics, natural sciences and technology.

➤ Students' creativity and entrepreneurship will be encouraged via an initiative for entrepreneurship and creative activities in the school.

With the upper secondary school reforms, students will be better prepared to meet the requirements of modern working life and developments taking place in various occupations and sectors and it will thus be easier for young people to get established in the labor market as employees or in their own business (Government offices of Sweden, 2011).

National education targets:

1. The percentage of 18-24-year-olds who have not completed upper secondary school and who are not studying is to be less than 10 per cent by 2020 and

2. The percentage of 30–34-year-olds who have at least a two-year post-secondary education is to be 40–45 per cent by 2020 (Government offices of Sweden, 2011).

Quality and Education

While schools consider themselves as a service supplier of knowledge and the students as customers of knowledge, we argue that considering students as customers of a school is an inappropriate understanding which can cause misinterpretation of the school-student relationship (Zineldin, 2006). We consider students as citizens of the school and education sector. Given the distinguishing features of the education, educational values should, ideally, be based on the long-term interests of students, society and institutional missions, goals and commitments (Douglas et al, 2006). Driscoll and Wicks, (1998) state that the need for a quality education is not obviously clear in the minds of all students, thus a customer orientation is not ensuring high quality programs.

There is no doubt about the global impact of the quality movement. In the development of most sectors (e.g. education, health-care), worldwide economic integration and the growth of the global market, quality becomes one of the main factors of organizational competition and success. Good quality education and research is two main corner stones to achieve high growth and a world class welfare. Good quality education is a main condition for each individual to develop his/her own skills and get new knowledge in order to be able to compete in both nationally and international labor market. Therefore quality assurance and quality enhancement should be involved, integrated and linked to the learning objectives, outcomes, teaching methods and student assessment. This process is called «constructive alignment» (Biggs, 2003).

A 5Qs Model

As we above mentioned, involving pupils in producing the knowledge, development and evaluation of the education object and process provides instructors with great understanding and direct insight into relevant issues of pupil learning and knowledge. Zineldin (2006) developed a new a model of five quality dimensions (5Qs) to evaluate or measure the quality of education. Some authors compared SERVQUAL and the 5 Qs model in order to find the differences and similarities

between them. They found that both models are focused on the importance of providing quality products and services. The difference is that the 5Qs is more comprehensive and introduces additional attributes such as infrastructure, atmosphere and interaction (Zamora and Escoriza, 2007).

The 5Qs model is more comprehensive and incorporates essential and multidimensional attributes which are missing in other models. Such attributes are the infrastructure, atmosphere and the interaction between the student and the educational (providers) staff. A comprehensive model should also include a component on goals, with questions directed at what student satisfaction should ultimately lead to, e.g. increased trust, increased likelihood for critical thinking, innovation, communication skills and increasing of the overall level of quality of the knowledge.

Total Quality is a function of (q1, q2, q3, q4 and q5):

In this study we modeled the student satisfaction as a function of the five higher-order quality dimensions (5Qs) based on TRM philosophy. The 5Qs model incorporates 45 independent variables, which were derived from the education, service quality and satisfaction literature. The number of the variables is not constant because of its situation dependence. Figure 1 illustrates the 5Qs model and its constructs where the Total quality (TQ) of the education is a function of the independent variables Q1-Q5.

Q1 Quality of the object (education or research itself) – Technical «what Quality».

It is related to the basic core of the education and its main objectives, procedures, courses or programs carried out and it focuses on the technical aspects. It measures the education itself; the main reason of why students are studying at a school. The school has the objective to fulfill the student and the society expectations, therefore it is important to maintain the “good education in form of study programs, courses and degrees impacting students’ life and future. From the psychological point of view, fulfilling the core education objective is one of the most important factors impacting the level of satisfaction.

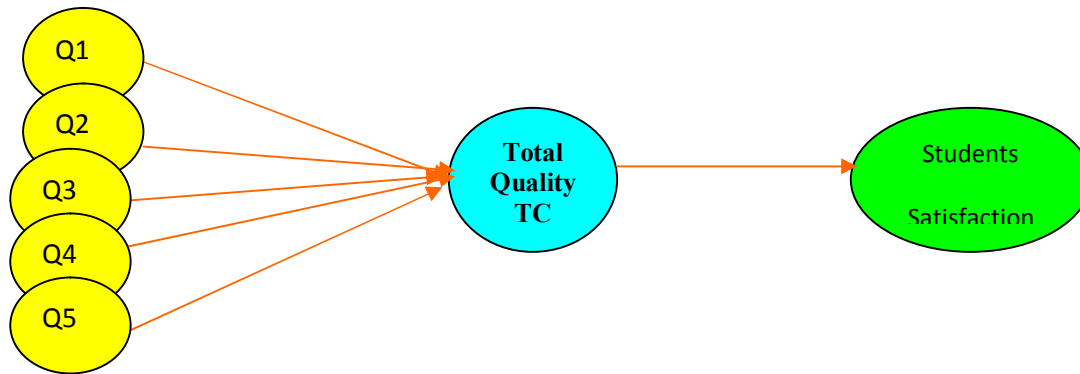


Figure 1. Zineldin's 5Qs: A Multidimensional Model of Education attributes and Students Satisfaction (HS)

Q2 Quality of the process – functional «how quality». How to deliver the object (lessons, individuality, flexibility, creativity, field work, exam forms, etc), and how students perceive their education. It measures how well educational activities are being implemented. Process indicators should receive more attention in the education. Teachers, headmasters and other personal can use process indicators to monitor activity at their facilities and to guide day-to-day decision-making. Students' attitudes are also included. This factor includes the efficiency and empathy during the education process, how the personnel monitor the student complaints, the grade of courtesy that the education services reflects to the student in order to transmit confidence and trust, the willingness to provide the education expected and the personal attention.

Q3 Quality of the infrastructure, tangible and intangible (competence, financial, technical and human recourses, self assessments, course evaluations, etc). Infrastructure of an educational organisation is the most important factor impacting the care of the citizens and hence their overall satisfaction. It is related to the competence, skills, attitudes, motivations experience, know-how, technology, internal relationships and reassures, activities, and how these activities are managed, co-operated and co-ordinated. These indicators should be considered very critical and important because the lack of any of these factors explains poor education quality.

Q4 Quality of the interaction and communication (among staff, between staff and leaders, between staff and citizens, citizens involvement, etc) measures the quality of information exchange (tutoring, lectures, individual meetings and supervision, feedback of the questions and exams, time and accuracy of the check up and exams result and even social exchange). Communication dimension evaluates the exchange process performed by the school in different aspects. This dimension measures how the school coordinate its services processes to provide high quality education and research. Satisfaction is influenced upon the receiving of adequate explanation and instructions before, during and after the classes and exams. Teachers ability to inspire and stimulate the critical thinking should be one of the most critical issues. The fact the most academic staff is overloaded can lead to the lack of extra time for the communication or interaction outside the lecture rooms. That is one of the most challenges the higher education sector faces.

Q5 Quality of the atmosphere (quality culture, common interest, common goal, participation of the staff reg. decision making, responsibilities, trust, commitment, authorities, structure of the organization, etc. the relationship and interaction process between the parties are influenced by the quality of the atmosphere in a specific environment where they cooperate and operate. The atmosphere indicators should be considered very critical and important because of the belief that the lack of frankly and friendly atmosphere explains poor quality of care in developing countries. Student working load should also be included in the Q5 dimensions. Students should also assess and evaluate their own performance. They can evaluate their own performance very high, even higher than their academic staff. From the psychological point of view people often try to avoid the feeling of guilt if something goes wrong. To protect or defense one self, people can try to over estimate their own capabilities and abilities. In this case students can have tendency to blame their teachers rather blaming themselves. That is one of the major dilemma of the objectivity of student assessments.

Finally, devising good indicators of quality is difficult. Indicators must provide reliable, objective, and relevant information about important issues; they must be sensitive to changes in performance; and they must be easy to calculate with available data. Of course, the indicators may be influenced by external factors such as the social and economic characteristics of the student environment. By linking infrastructure, interaction and atmosphere indicators to the quality of object and processes; researchers and university leaders and faculty members can document which changes in services improve the overall satisfaction of the students, hence the ultimate outcomes of the Swedish national reform of upper-secondary education.

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Мосад Зінельдін, Пітер Борен

Школа майбутнього. Нова швецька національна реформа середньої освіти

У статті висвітлена ідея школи майбутнього, описують різні аспекти нової швецької реформи середньої освіти. Особливу увагу приділено опису 5Qs моделі, що об'єднує в собі обов'язкові та багатоаспектні ознаки, що відсутні в інших моделях.

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Школа будущего. Новая шведская национальная реформа среднего образования

В статье высветлена идея школы будущего, описывают разные аспекты новой шведской национальной реформы среднего образования. Особое внимание уделено описанию 5Qs модели, которая объединяет в себе обязательные и многоаспектные признаки, которые отсутствуют в других моделях.