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THE PERSISTENT DIFFERENTIATION

- the education commission's reform work 1724-1778

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The Persistent Differentiation: The Education Commission's Reform Work, 1724–1778

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Introduction

The work of the Education Commission from 1745 is one of the more thoroughly studied investigations in Swedish administrative history in general, and the most studied in the Swedish history of education in particular. The aim here is therefore not to provide new empirical results.¹ My hope instead is to be able to provide a different and broader interpretation of its activities than has thus far characterised historical writings on the work of the Commission.

To do this, the ideas of the American anthropologist Luigi Cavalli-Sforza on the transfer of knowledge within a culture are a suitable starting point. They make it easier to understand the importance of the way education is formulated, as well as the arguments behind this.² Cavalli-Sforza maintains that cultures where the transfer of information preferably takes place between people in the same generation – horizontal or intra-generational – tend to be dynamic and changeable. This can be compared to cultures where the information is disseminated between generations – vertical or inter-generational – which tend to be preserved and to be less prone to change. The reason is that in this case it is the older generations teaching the younger ones, who hence to a greater extent acquire the traditions and customs of their elders. This idea can be expanded with the insight that some basic knowledge should probably be transferred vertically in order to form the basis for a more accurate and effective exchange of knowledge, such as the art of reading and writing or the art of counting. Some believe that this also applies to identity-creating subjects, such as native language, history, religious education, etc.

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¹ The source material that has been generated by the Education Commission is stored in the National Archives of Sweden, Äldre kommittéarkiv [Older Committee Archive] (ÄK) 849.

² Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza, *Genes, Peoples, and Languages* (Berkeley, 2000), 179–187.

As our educational institutions – possibly with the exception of the family in all its various forms – are the most important agents for the vertical or inter-generational transfer of information in Western culture, reforms within this area are extremely valuable for understanding processes of change in our society. From Cavalli-Sforza’s perspective, changes to curricula are even more important than the appropriation of new knowledge through the transfer or production of knowledge, for example through research. Changes in education namely create dynamics in one of our most conservative cultural institutions, and are therefore decisive for the development of society in the longer term. For this reason, the battle for the content of education is important, not only for those who conduct it and those affected by it, but also for everyone who has an interest in historical change in general.

Establishment of the Commission

The debate on schools as an arena for education and learning or for utility and experience was first conducted in Sweden long before the beginning of the Age of Liberty. For example, educational historian Wilhelm Sjöstrand is able to identify extensive demands for schooling for middle-class businesses in the 1620s.³ At this time, the country’s maritime towns were also to establish mathematics schools for the teaching of subjects, such as accountancy. Technical training within various public administrations, such as for surveyors and artillerymen, was also introduced in the 17th century. Olof Rudbeck’s colleges in Uppsala during the second half of the 17th century, covering everything from surveying and house building to forestry, represent an early example of what can be referred to as technical university education. Per Dahl, an historian of ideas and science, has demonstrated how the initiative was based on a renaissance for technical knowledge with a theoretical foundation and took place with the best interests of society in mind.⁴ This was about opening up the university for craftsmen as well, frequently with socio-economic reasons. One Rudbeck student, who argued relatively early but all the more energetically for a utilitarian motive in the education, was Christopher Polhem. In 1716, he regretted that young people who wanted to devote themselves to technical professions were forced to study Latin before they could transfer to mechanical sciences and mechanical training.⁵

³ Wilhelm Sjöstrand, Pedagogikens historia II, Sverige och de nordiska grannländerna till början av 1700-talet [History of Education II, Sweden and its Nordic Neighbours until the Beginning of the 18th Century] (Lund, 1958), 279–282.

⁴ Per Dahl, Svensk ingenjörskonst under stormaktstiden: Olof Rudbecks tekniska undervisning och praktiska verksamhet [Swedish Art of Engineering during the Age of Greatness: Olof Rudbeck’s Teaching of Technology and Technical Enterprises], Department of History of Science and Ideas, Uppsala University, Publication 14 (Uppsala, 1995), 19–35, 159–184.

⁵ David Löfberg, Det nationalekonomiska motivet i svensk pedagogik under 1700-talet [The National Economic Motive in Swedish Education during the 18th Century] (Uppsala, 1949), 108–115.

During the course of the 18th century, several more courses with a practical focus were also established. One well-known example is Anders Gabriel Duhre's ambition to convert the dilapidated royal barn Ultuna into a vocational school. The sheep farming school at Höjentorp and the factory school in Alingsås dating from the 1730s, in conjunction with Jonas Alströmer's textile mill there, are other similar initiatives. These were not long-lived, however, and disappeared in the 1760s in conjunction with the funding policy being subjected to critical examination. Later, during the 1770s, a much more thriving veterinarian school was established in Skara instead. At approximately the same time, a more vocationally-oriented school in Stockholm was also established, which took into account demands for modern languages and science subjects at the expense of Greek and Hebrew.⁶

The tension between tradition and utility in educational issues was nothing new during the Age of Liberty. On the one side there was the medieval school under the control of the Church, with piety and classical languages on the timetable, as well as secular works, often several centuries old. Ideal-typically, its aim was to train the student in order to give him (sic!) a general, overall view of the world in summary (Lat. *universitas*), a knowledge identity that facilitated communication with likeminded individuals. On the other side was the 'nursery' (Lat. *seminarium*) in the service of society, which exclusively taught the subjects that could be defended on the basis of what is best for society, a guiding light for which the ruling groups were the only interpreters. Ideal-typically, its aim was to provide the student with the skills that were needed in order to best solve the tasks that might be anticipated within a particular choice of profession, and in this way make this person a good citizen.

In general, the Age of Liberty's demands for an altered education system were primarily based on three ideological components. Firstly, dating from the 17th century, there was a growing belief in the ability of human reason to structure certain problems, which had previously been deemed unsolvable, in such a way that they could be dealt with either mathematically or in some other way. In this context, it is worth pointing out Wolffianism's standing at Swedish universities towards the middle of the 1700s.⁷ However, it is clear that the literature of antiquity also supported a rational policy when it came to organising education. The importance of reason in the education could consequently be cited by different sides in the education debate. Secondly,

⁶ Ibid., 364–382.

⁷ Tore Frängsmyr, Wolffiansimens genombrott i Uppsala: Frihetstida universitetsfilosofi till 1700-talets mitt [Breakthrough of Wolffianism in Uppsala: The University's Philosophy in the Age of Liberty until the Middle of the 18th Century], Acta universitatis Upsaliensis: Writings concerning Uppsala University C. Organisation and History 26 (Uppsala, 1972).

greater focus was placed on nature as a guiding principle for the education, both as an area of knowledge alongside the traditional texts, and as a model for organising the education effectively, with Locke's psychological empiricism as a way of approaching the educational problem. The education was to take place in connection with the individual's mental and physical development.⁸ Thirdly there was increased interest in education from a mercantile perspective. Schools were viewed as a state tool for increasing the national income and for learning about God's work, the physico-theological argument.⁹ The three ideological currents behind the pressure for change to traditional education can be summarised as follows: the educational with growing individualism and belief in reason; the natural historical and philosophical with both content-related and educational implications; and the husbandry-oriented, which entailed an emphasis on various sciences, often as a basis for husbandry subjects as well as a path towards religious conviction.

Politically speaking, there was also a hotbed in need of a reform of the 1693 school statute, which had been underlined in the Instruments of Government of 1719 and 1720.¹⁰ Through the 1693 school statute, for example, the 'apologist class' from 1649 for counting and reading had gone. Sjöstrand has, for instance, therefore viewed the statute as a significant strengthening of the ecclesiastical focus of the grammar schools.¹¹ Nevertheless it was primarily the clergy who, by way of a reaction, ensured that the apologists were reintroduced in an interim statute in 1724. The Education Commission's leading present-day interpreter, the educationalist David Löfberg, has explained the priests' positive attitude towards the new statute by the fact that it still did not contain any 'new objective and entailed no great advances towards education that was more suited to practical life. The subjects taught remained largely the same as before'.¹² The fact that the 1724 school statute really was a temporary solution is also evident from the fact that it was not printed, but only reported in copies. This gave rise to efforts to bring about a more permanent school ordinance.

The ideological currents and the political requirements during the first decades of the Age of Liberty can be said to have converged in the real problem regarding the selection of the talented,

⁸ Nils G. Ohlson, Det pedagogiska problemet i Sverige under frihetstiden och gustavianska tiden (till omkring 1805): En översikt [The Educational Problem in Sweden during the Age of Liberty and the Gustavian Period (until around 1805): An Overview] (Stockholm, 1939), 13–16.

⁹ Löfberg, 58–59.

¹⁰ Hugo Hernlund, Bidrag till den svenska skollagstiftningens historia under partitidehvarvet 1718-1809 [Contributions to the History of Swedish School Legislation during the Party Period 1718–1809], Part 1 1718–1760 (Stockholm, 1882), 18–25.

¹¹ Sjöstrand, 331.

¹² Löfberg, 63.

delectus ingeniorum (the talent selection), i.e. the issue of how the students are selected for various studies, and the testing of the talented, *selectus ingeniorum* (the separation of talents), i.e. the issue of how students can be separated for different disciplines.¹³ The selection and testing of the talented was a real political issue that gave rise to proposals to investigate education during the 1730s, not least on the basis of the educational programme of Andreas Rydelius, a professor and bishop from Lund, and the writings of his pupil Gustaf Ruder.¹⁴ However, the clergy were generally opposed to the proposals, and the issue cropped up instead in other contexts, with more of a husbandry bias. After many ups and downs over a number of parliaments, and more or less in passing, the Chancery Committee received His Royal Majesty's formal mandate to propose experts for an education commission. This comprised a total of fifteen people, who held their first meeting in January 1746. The Education Commission had thus been formed. Its subsequent history would be no less complicated than its establishment.

The Commission's work

The Education Commission's work is probably best known for its demands for a change to the education system which, in the words of Sten Lindroth, would make 'the people rich and happy – natural history, chemistry, experimental physics and mechanics as basic sciences and their application in agriculture, mining, industries and handicrafts'; this was put forward by the same people who preached the official Hat economic policy.¹⁵ They conducted the work systematically, starting with a review of the consistories' and the chapters' pronouncements dating from the end of the 1720s regarding the 1724 school statute. After this, the Education Commission was divided up into two committees, one for the academic constitutions and one for the preparation of a new school statute. The committee for academic constitutions had a simpler job, as the information was easier to collate and analyse. After the 1746-1747 parliament and further twists and turns, in 1750 the Education Commission presented its famous attempt to

¹³ Ohlson, 47–66. It is also maintained here that the selection of the talented and the testing of the talented are synonymous terms, the former being more common in older language usage than the latter. Others maintain that '*delectus*' is more correct Latin, see: K. G. Leinberg, 'Om snillevalet i vår äldre skollagstiftning' ['On the Selection of the Talented in Our Old School Legislation'], Journal issued by the Education Association of Finland (separate, 1884), 3–38.

¹⁴ Wilhelm Sjöstrand, Pedagogik och temperamentslära [Study of Education and Temperament], Educational writings 181-182 (Stockholm, 1943), 114–147; Christian Lundahl, Viljan att veta vad andra vet: Kunskapsbedömning i tidigmodern, modern och senmodern skola [To Know What Others Know: Assessment in Education in Pre-Modern, Modern and Late-Modern Times], Working Life in Transition 2006:8, National Institute of Working Life (Stockholm, 2006), 146–167; Carola Nordbäck, 'Att konstruera lydnad: Nedslag i den lutherska 1700-talspedagogiken' ['Designing Obedience: Examples of 18th Century Lutheran Education'], Presentation at 'Nyttiga kunskaper, sann gudsfuktan och goda seder: Den unga människan i fostran och undervisning, 1600-1920' ['Useful Knowledge, True Piety and Good Morals: Young People in Education and Instruction, 1600–1920'], Härnösand, 24-25 March 2006.

¹⁵ Sten Lindroth, Svensk lärdomshistoria [The History of Learning in Sweden] 3 Age of Liberty (Stockholm, 1978), 70.

establish a new university organisation that reflected social needs better than traditional academic subject areas. After a sharp response from the consistory, the Commission's proposal did not get very far. However, the establishment of new graduate examinations alongside the master's degree as well as professorships in physics and chemistry was implemented for posterity.¹⁶

At the same time, the work on a new school ordinance was intensified. In a preliminary work, natural history and economics were introduced as new subjects in both elementary and upper school. Along with mathematics and physics, these were considered to be subjects with a great general interest. In addition, subject options would be available, i.e. a stronger differentiation of the traditional education, and progression to upper school and even university would be able to take place without having studied Latin, an unprecedented concept taking the centuries of digesting Latin, which still characterised traditional school education at this time, as a starting point.¹⁷ In other words, the Education Commission's initial discussions on a new school statute included a whole series of radical proposals that were now sent out for referral to consistories and chapters. It took time for the answers to be received, however, and the work dragged on. The delay actually lasted the whole of the 1750s. When the answers were received, it emerged that the consistories and the chapters were split on the issue. All in all, it can be stated that many wanted to change traditional education, but that too much differentiation met with fierce resistance.¹⁸

The proposal for the new school statute was revised on the basis of the opinions, before being presented during the 1760–1762 parliament. By this time, the criticisms of the consistories and the chapters had worn away the most radical parts of the preliminary work. Above all, the demands for differentiation of the education had been toned down.¹⁹ However, the proposal remained that natural history, physics and economics, which were almost entirely absent in the 1724 ordinance, without exception should be taught 'in a rudimentary way'. The teaching should 'be so general, that here too a foundation can be laid for such ways of life that are associated with husbandry and handicrafts and that require a foundation of studies'.²⁰

¹⁶ Claes Annerstedt, Uppsala universitets historia, 3:1 1719-1792 [History of Uppsala University, 3:1 1719–1792] (Uppsala, 1913), 264–265.

¹⁷ Löfberg, 233–238.

¹⁸ Ibid., 223–231.

¹⁹ Löfberg, 238–239.

²⁰ Quote from Hernlund, 55. The proposed school statute can be found in 'Project til en förbättrad och förnyad Förordning för Scholar och Gymnasier' ['Project for a New and Improved Ordinance for Schools and Upper Schools'], 18 December 1760, in Utdrag utur alle ifrån 1729 års slut utkomne publice handlingar, placater, förordningar, resolutioner och publikationer [Excerpts from the Public Documents, Placards, Ordinances, Resolutions and Publications Issued at the end of 1729], vol. 7 1758–1764, (ed.), R. G. Modée (Stockholm, 1766), 4991–5030.

This new proposed school ordinance in 1760 was also sent out on referral, which meant that eight out of fifteen pronouncements did not have any objections to the proposal for new subjects in elementary or upper school. Some were negative, such as Uppsala consistory, which considered that natural history and husbandry were sufficient in the more junior classes. However, only in Strängnäs and Härnösand was there a complete rejection of the new subjects in both elementary and upper school.²¹ All in all, it can be established that there were admittedly dissenting opinions among the consistories that expressed an opinion, particularly against the idea of new subjects in elementary school. Nevertheless, the criticism was much weaker than that of the original proposal for extensive differentiation. Revised in this way, the proposal that was presented to the 1760–1762 parliament could consequently be accepted much more readily by those running upper and elementary schools.²²

However, the results of the Education Commission's work were presented at anything but a suitable time, as the Hat Party was now on the decline. The 'political fair wind' for the most robust mercantilism with the focus on industry had subsided, transformed instead into a stronger political focus on supporting agriculture.²³ The 1760–1762 parliament displayed a weakening of the economic policy, which was even attacked by the Hat Party's own. The utilitarianism in the educational field was unable to meet with approval either. An alternative way of studying the political shift has been to start from functions of political networks, with the conclusion that social exchange had given in to the moulding of public opinion, where paradoxically enough interest in natural history has been maintained as an important ingredient and identity creator.²⁴ The Education Commission's proposal was referred in any case to the smaller secret committee, where the discussions dragged on. The proposal had been discussed within the clergy, with the result that the decision was taken to wait for the referral submissions, which had not yet been received by parliament. In light of this, the smaller secret committee's subsequent handling of the school ordinance proposal also had to be deferred. Nevertheless, later during the parliament, some forces within the clergy wanted to investigate the potential to devise a proposal for a new school ordinance. However, they finally realised that the work would have to wait until the following parliament due to the lack of time.²⁵

²¹ Löfberg, 243–248.

²² Ibid., 241, 248.

²³ Karin Johannisson, 'Naturvetenskap på reträtt: En diskussion om naturvetenskapens status under svenskt 1700-tal' ['Science on the Retreat: A Discussion on the Status of Science in Sweden in the 1700s'], *Lychnos*, 29 (1979–1980), 109–154.

²⁴ Patrik Winton, *Frihetstidens politiska praktik: Nätverk och offentlighet 1746–1766* [The Dynamics of Politics in Sweden, 1746–1766], Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis: Studia Historica Upsaliensia 223 (Uppsala, 2006).

²⁵ Hernlund, 59–60.

The work in the clergy's ecclesiastical committee was not completed during the 1765-1766 parliament either.²⁶ It has also been claimed that the reason for this was that the political situation, with increased party differences, was unfavourable for an agreement between the estates regarding a new school ordinance.²⁷ During the next parliament (1769-1770) the matter was discussed again by the smaller secret deputation, which proposed that the secret committee should write to His Royal Majesty to ask for the Education Commission to be brought back. This did take place, although with a decimated team of eleven members instead of fifteen.²⁸ The work during the following years resulted in a new proposed school ordinance in 1778 which, according to the Education Commission, was appropriate for 'current times and the growth of the sciences'.²⁹ Sjöstrand has felt that the proposal was an expression of 'conservatism'.³⁰ However, the Education Commission's proposal did not lead to a decision on a new school ordinance this time either. The matter was shelved, or more accurately no measures were taken, for several decades until a new school statute saw the light of day in 1807.

Löfberg has noted that the Education Commission's work as a whole appears to be 'a result of the general educational reform movement of the time, with its demands for schooling that could satisfy a more wide-ranging educational requirement than the need for education simply for ecclesiastical and scholarly information, and which could provide practical, useful knowledge both on an individual level and in public life'.³¹ Otherwise, Lindroth represents the most positive evaluation of the Commission's efforts, pointing out that the proposed school ordinance in 1760, with the teaching of natural history and husbandry as early as elementary school, actually partially bore fruit. From the middle of the 18th century, Linnaean natural history and experimental physics were namely introduced at one upper school after another, alongside general science which had always been studied at Swedish grammar schools. New textbooks were printed; natural history cabinets and instruments of various kinds were acquired.³² The

²⁶ Hugo Hernlund, Skolordnings-förslaget av den 28 november 1778 [School Ordinance Proposal Dated 28 November 1778], from: Inbjudning till öfvervarande af årsexamina vid Stockholms gymnasium, realläroverk samt Klara, Jakobs och Ladugårdslands lägre allmänna läroverk vårterminen 1880 [Invitation to Attend the Annual Exams at Stockholm Upper School, Grammar School as well as Klara, Jakob's and Ladugårdland's Junior Grammar School, Spring Term 1880] (Stockholm, 1880), II-III.

²⁷ Wilhelm Sjöstrand, Pedagogikens historia III:1, Sverige och de nordiska grannländerna under frihetstiden och gustavianska tiden [History of Education III:1, Sweden and its Nordic Neighbours during the Age of Liberty and the Gustavian Period] (Lund, 1958), 89-90.

²⁸ Hernlund, Skolordnings-förslaget av den 28 november 1778, IV.

²⁹ Quoted from *ibid.*, V.

³⁰ Sjöstrand, Pedagogikens historia III:1, 103.

³¹ Löfberg, 239-240.

³² Lindroth, 70-71, 271. Concerning natural history cabinets, see Yngve Löwegren, Naturaliesamlingar och naturhistoriska undervisning vid läroverken [Natural History Collections and Natural History Education at Grammar Schools], Yearbooks on the History of Swedish Education 132 (Stockholm, 1974), 27-34.

pioneers in this process appear to have been the upper schools in Skara, Växjö and Göteborg, while those in Härnösand and Strängnäs appear to have been the ones most tradition-bound.³³ All in all, it can be noted that the currents with a focus on husbandry made a breakthrough when it came to making space for subjects, such as economics, physics and chemistry, at the expense of the classical languages. The demands for new subjects remained, despite the fact that the idea of differentiation had become less prominent in line with the 1760 proposal.

The Commission's legacy

Viewed in a broader perspective, the Education Commission's legacy can be said to have two main aspects. Firstly it has been studied with regard to the proposals to reform education in elementary and upper schools. The starting point in these cases has often been educational currents from the Continent, as well as that which has anachronistically been termed the economic motive.³⁴ Secondly, it has been analysed as the state authority's and above all certain Hat Party mercantilists' attempt to gain control of university education and research. In these cases, the focus has often been on the matter of a new faculty subdivision at Uppsala University.³⁵

The historical analyses of the work of the Education Commission have thus empirically followed the same organisational subdivision as applied to the Commission's two committees, one for the academic constitutions and one for a new school statute. The same division also applies to the Education Commission's chronology, which started with reforms to the content of higher education from 1746 to 1750, followed by the reform of more basic education from 1751 to 1778. A certain chronology can also be discerned in the Education Commission's historiography. During the 1880s and the 1910s, the focus was on reviews and reproduction of sources regarding the work of the Education Commission relating to school-, upper school- and university education reform.³⁶ During the 1930s and 1940s, the interest focused primarily on the further educational-ideological currents that influenced the work of amending the school statute.³⁷ In more recent times, the focus has been more on the political-ideological backgrounds to the

³³ Löfberg, 302–364.

³⁴ Hernlund, Bidrag till den svenska skollagstiftningens historia under partitidehvarvet 1718-1809, Part 1; Löfberg, Det nationalekonomiska motivet.

³⁵ Torngny T. Segerstedt, Den akademisk friheten under frihetstiden: En sammanställning [Academic Freedom during the Age of Liberty: A Compilation], Acta universitatis Upsaliensis: Writings concerning Uppsala University C. Organisation and History 29 (Uppsala, 1975).

³⁶ Hernlund, Bidrag till den svenska skollagstiftningens historia under partitidehvarvet 1718-1809, Part 1; Annerstedt, Uppsala universitets historia, 3:1 & Uppsala universitets historia, Bihang 4 1749-1776 [History of Uppsala University, Appendix 4 1749–1776] (Uppsala, 1912).

³⁷ Ohlson, Det pedagogiska problemet; Löfberg, Det nationalekonomiska motivet.

attempts to reform university education.³⁸ The only break in this chronology as regards the historical research is a PhD thesis from autumn 2006 that once again discussed the Education Commission, or actually its origins, from an educational perspective.³⁹

The historical analyses of the work of the Education Commission can also be said to follow a certain subdivision. With regard to the reform work relating to the academic constitutions, the explanations have often been based on political conditions. The university organisation has been viewed here as an arena for a political power struggle regarding education, where conservatism stood against reform attempts to adapt it to various practically-oriented and administrative interests.⁴⁰ The historical research has fitted the Commission's proposal regarding the improvement of the academic school system in 1750 into this general political framework, without any great fuss or deeper reflection.⁴¹ It was a matter of creating an education system that did not only educate public officials, but also provided education focusing on various industries, irrespective of whether the doctrine behind the ideas should be referred to as mercantilism or fiscalism.

Generally speaking, the political pressure on the universities was without doubt very great during the Hat Party's period of domination from the 1730s to the 1760s, with censorship of chancellors and politically appointed teachers.⁴² The political interest in universities during the Age of Liberty is understandable, in light of the fact that they were still primarily institutions for educating the clergy with considerable strategic-political interest, thanks to the influence of pulpits over the peasantry. One case that has been studied in greater depth is constitutional law, with the conclusion that the political interest in the subject was dictated by its utility in various

³⁸ Segerstedt, Den akademisk friheten; Hjalmar Fors, 'Att undervisa i Nytt: Etablerandet av kemi som svenskt universitetsämne 1750-1766' ['Teaching Utility: The Establishment of Chemistry as a Swedish University Subject 1750-1766'], Master's thesis in History of Science and Ideas, Department of History of Science and Ideas, Uppsala University (1997); Per Nilsén, Att 'stoppa munnen till på bespottare': Den akademiska undervisningen i svensk statsrätt under frihetstiden ['To Shut the Mouths of Mockers': Academic Education in Swedish Constitutional Law during the Age of Liberty], Writings published by the Olin Foundation for Legal History, established by Gustav and Carin Olin, Series 1, Legal History Monograph Series 59 (Lund, 2001).

³⁹ Lundahl, Viljan att veta vad andra vet.

⁴⁰ Hernlund, Bidrag till den svenska skollagstiftningens historia under partitidevarvet 1718-1809, Part 1, 32.

⁴¹ See primarily Segerstedt, Den akademisk friheten.

⁴² Erik Bollerup, 'Sven Bring (Lagerbring) och kanslercensuren i Lund på 1750-talet' ['Sven Bring (Lagerbring) and the Censorship of the Chancellor in Lund in the 1750s'], Scandia 33 (1967), 313-344; Lars-Arne Norborg, 'Universiteten som indoktrineringsinstrument: Statsmakten och studium politicum vid Lunds universitet under Nils Palmstiernas kanslertid (1752-1761)' ['The Universities as Instruments of Indoctrination: The State Authority and *Studium Politicum* at Lund University during Nils Palmstierna's Period as Chancellor (1752-1761)'], in: Historia och samhälle: Studier tillägnade Jerker Rosén [History and Society: Studies Dedicated to Jerker Rosén] (Lund, 1975), 95-116; Sven-Eric Liedman, Den synliga handen: Anders Berch och ekonomiämnena vid 1700-talets svenska universitet [The Visible Hand: Anders Berch and the Economic Subjects at 18th Century Swedish Universities] (Stockholm, 1986).

contexts and that its disciplinary function was emphasised in particular by the Education Commission, which thus constituted part of the attempts to get the teaching of constitutional law to reflect the prevailing party ideology.⁴³

With regard to the reform of the school statute, educational ideas have been the starting point. The foreign influence has often been maintained. It is also clear that, for example, John Locke's way of thinking became popular among writers, such as Lars Salvius and the above-mentioned Rydelius.⁴⁴ In part, however, the new individualism was difficult to reconcile with the strict economic doctrine regarding the utility of the education for society in general and industry in particular. Educational historian Nils G. Ohlson has pointed out that the educational goals of the Swedish mercantilists were aimed rather at a German citizen who, through knowledge, diligence and loyalty, served the general public more than the English gentleman.⁴⁵ The Education Commission has consequently been divided, both in its own time and in the analyses of posterity. On the one hand, it has been viewed as a weapon in the political struggle for the universities, and, on the other, as a bureaucratic exponent of educationally targeted school reforms.

A consistent striving for differentiation

However, there are also components that bring the various parts of the Education Commission together more than keeping them apart. The emphasis on the teaching of practical subjects, such as physics and chemistry, as well as husbandry, applied both to schools and universities, as did the arguments for their introduction. For example, deputy director Claes Ekeblad in the Education Commission's committee for the academic constitutions used educational arguments to introduce new professorships in physics and chemistry at Uppsala University:

The order that mathematics uses for the portrayal of its doctrines, when it is duly investigated and scrutinised, is occasionally the most suitable for getting the talented person accustomed with clarity, accentuating reflection and developing the gift of invention. Once all self-assumed opinions and unfounded guesses have been rejected from physics, no other theories are tolerated, nor can others be adopted, other than those that, with incontrovertible reasons, meticulous experiments and scrupulous observations, are either established or verified.⁴⁶

⁴³ Nilsén, Att 'stoppa munnen till på bespottare'.

⁴⁴ Löfberg, 92, 132, 140–141.

⁴⁵ Ohlson, 68–69, 80–81.

⁴⁶ Hernlund, Bidrag till den svenska skollagstiftningens historia under partitidehvarvet 1718-1809, Part 1, Appendix IX, 5.

Educational arguments were apparently also taken into account within the Commission's committee for the academic constitutions.

When the economic debate is almost exclusively based on the interests of those in power at the expense of the majority's freedom of action and freedom of thought, then the distribution of work (the 'readjustment' between the sectors) and hence education becomes a primary point, regardless of the phase to which this applies.⁴⁷ With such a perspective, it is in the interests of society to make best possible use of the production potential of the citizens, and hence to create courses that take advantage of the variations between individuals with regard to abilities and interests. This train of thought can be seen in the famous memorial to the 1746-1747 parliament by Carl Gustaf Löwenhielm, Judge Referee to the Supreme Court, in which he states that:

It is natural history that teaches us to recognise the various types of rock and soil, plants and animals, and to know their nature. It should be taught at the schools of all students, while their minds are sharpest and hearts most open to variety, and before they have settled on any particular purpose. When these pupils have become students, they should seek to make further progress in this respect, and each and every individual should at least select one aspect, ideally the one closest to their hearts. This must not be neglected, this science should be so well respected and honoured in the faculty of philosophy, so that nobody should be able to gain *honores academicos* who had not demonstrated in *publico examine* that he either understood all kinds of rock and ore types, soils, salts, some part of mining, chemistry or seed management, grass types, tree species, dye plants, medicinal plants, sheep farming, silk worms, insects, bird catching, fisheries, or other associated areas that served good husbandry.⁴⁸

Among the highlighted sources of inspiration for Löwenhielm's ideas, in addition to Carl von Linnæus himself, is the Educational doctrine by Eric Eklund, a student of Linnæus, which was published in conjunction with the parliament and which Lindroth has referred to as 'the most ambitious and independent educational work of the century', with its demands for a common basic education for all, divided into two courses of studies, one for public officials and one for businessmen.⁴⁹ After this display of Hat rhetoric, Löwenhielm naturally took up a position in the Education Commission in 1748 when others left.

⁴⁷ Löfberg, 71.

⁴⁸ Quoted from Hernlund, Bidrag till den svenska skollagstiftningens historia under partidehvarfvet 1718-1809, Part 1, 42.

⁴⁹ Quote from Lindroth, 69–70. About sources of inspiration, see Isak Fehr, En svensk uppfostringslära från medlet af 1700-talet: Studier i svensk pedagogik [A Swedish Educational Doctrine from the Middle of the 18th Century: Studies in Swedish Education], from: Strängnäs allmänna läroverks årsprogram 1884 [Strängnäs' Grammar School's Annual Programme for 1884] (Strängnäs, 1884), 15; Löfberg, 124–125.

Physico-theology's link between husbandry and subjects within the field of natural history as well as theology can hardly have hampered the work of the Education Commission aimed at reforming education in a more practical way. This consequently was about not only studying nature to reveal God's work, but also teaching about the utility of nature in order for people to benefit from the gifts that had been provided.⁵⁰ Using this line of argument, Johan Browallius, professor and bishop of Turku, as well as his teacher, Linnaeus, believed that the grounds for the husbandry subjects were in those areas of knowledge that we now gather under the heading of natural science, and which in the 18th century could be termed natural history, geography, botany, physics and chemistry.⁵¹ Physico-theological arguments thus softened the hardest blows against those who advocated a more traditional educational content, no doubt making the newfangled ideas easier to swallow. It is correct to say that both Browallius and Eklund, the two thinkers who had the greatest influence on the Education Commission, also had clear physico-theological starting points for their reform proposals.⁵² The physico-theological approach supported the Age of Liberty's utility trends in education, both at universities and in schools, with the introduction of new subjects, such as husbandry and science subjects.

The arguments that derived from educational considerations, utility and physico-theology all led to the conclusion that new subjects were required in various stages of education. This meant primarily that these new subjects constituted education alternatives that thus differentiated education. In actual fact, both the Education Commission's committees wrestled with the problem of how to create a school that did not standardise the students, but rather diversified them. In the proposal for new academic constitutions, considerable space, in fact the majority, was devoted to schools and upper schools. It was stated here that:

In order to achieve a desirable change in this respect, the committee will now only propose in general (while a more careful examination most accommodatingly can be associated with the supervision of the school system) that all of these young people's leaders, both general and individual, be urged to allow the cultivation of reason and the examination of the talented to be the primary concern of the young people entrusted to them: that to this end they take the greatest possible pains to help him as soon as his thoughts begin to settle, to

⁵⁰ Tore Frängsmyr, 'Den gudomliga ekonomin: Religion och hushållning i 1700-talets Sverige' ['The Divine Economy: Religion and Husbandry in 18th Century Sweden'], Lychnos: Lärdomshistoriska Samfundets årsbok [Lychnos: Yearbook of the Swedish History of Science Society] 26 (1971-1972), 217-244.

⁵¹ Sven Widmalm, 'Gravören och docenterna: Cosmographiska sällskapet i Uppsala 1758-1778' ['The Engraver and the Senior Lecturers: Cosmographic Society in Uppsala 1758-1778'], in Gunnar Broberg, Gunnar Eriksson & Karin Johannisson (eds.), Kunskapens trädgårdar: Om institutioner och institutionaliseringar i vetenskapen och livet [Gardens of Knowledge: About Institutions and Institutionalisation in Science and Life], (Stockholm, 1988), 78-106.

⁵² Löfberg, 92.

develop the natural art of reason, not so much through mnemonic rules, much less without homework, but more through discussions, questions and a consistent and in all respects developed application, ideally to Mathesin, whose basic teachings in this way could also be implanted in him in line with the growth and strength of the idea: that they in a similar way proceed in the other sciences, and not rush so much that they soon complete them, so as to portray them clearly and convincingly, well aware that the time that is lost with a beginner, in the long term is won back by a trained person with numerous advantages: that during all of this they give careful consideration, from which both the intelligence's and the desire's capabilities of the young person revolve, and to which they chiefly attach themselves, either his judgement or his power of imagination is or will be prevalent; that they as such through employed moral or psychological observations try even more closely to ascertain which of many sciences appears to be the easiest and most suited to him, as it will soon become apparent which ones he grasps most readily and sticks with for longest, those which should be considered his main subject, with more means, that a skilful and mature leader himself can easily think up: that in order to gain sufficient time for this, they no longer hold up the student with Latin.⁵³

Statements such as this bear witness to the fact that the work of the Education Commission related more to introducing testing of the talented, i.e. how the talents could be separated for the study of different subjects, more than the selection of the talented, i.e. how suitable talents could best be selected in order to be educated with the greatest possible socio-economic return. Using the Latin terms, it was more a case of *selectus ingeniorum* than *delectus ingeniorum*.

In the Education Commission's proposal for new academic constitutions in 1750, the central idea quite rightly was that university education should also be differentiated in a clearer and more pronounced fashion than previously, when master's degrees were obtained by those who had gone through the preparatory faculty of philosophy. The proposal entailed the establishment of five faculties that better corresponded to the main groups in the administrative system than the traditional faculties. The proposal mentioned a preparatory faculty, a faculty of theology, a civil (actually legal-financial and fiscal) faculty, a faculty of mathematics with a military focus, and a faculty of physics incorporating medicine and mining and metallurgy.⁵⁴ The preparatory faculty was to be responsible for the basic education within the various areas that were considered necessary. After these studies, the students would choose one of the four specialist faculties. This differentiation did not only entail the questioning of higher education as a general, overall synopsis, it was also a threat to the tasks and the actual fundamental idea of the traditional university.

⁵³ Segerstedt, 139.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 132–137.

In the proposal for a new school statute that the Education Commission presented in 1760, the notion of differentiation had been formulated even more clearly:

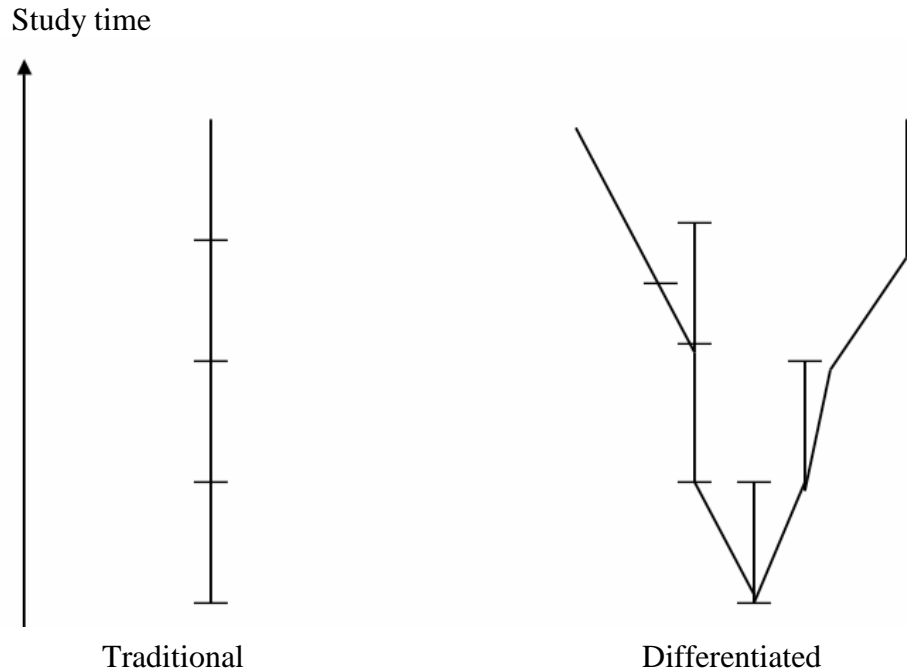
If a young person, according to his own inclination and with the will of his parents or guardians, has selected a particular way of life for the future, he should actually receive education in those areas that are required for this. How, and this with the other young people, in particular the more mature, might it be able to take place, and every one at the same time applied and educated for this purpose, if he, according to his natural talents and other circumstances, may best serve this as a very important objective for the State, but about which nothing can be secured, the Bishops and the Consistories in each foundation, in consultation with the teachers, should give all attentive, cautious and possible care, so that in future well-founded and skilled subjects may be made available for the State for its many offices and the management of its operations.⁵⁵

Both when it came to reforming the universities in 1750 and the schools in 1760, the idea was to differentiate by providing more space for alternative subjects. In these projects, physico-theological, husbandry-related and educational arguments were used to varying degrees, both for universities and schools.

Unfortunately, the different educational stages (university and school), as well as the different times (1750 and 1760) have too much come to be the starting point for our understanding of the work of the Education Commission. In actual fact, however, it is perfectly possible to view the Commission's efforts, at least for the first fifteen years, as a persistent and very coherent endeavour to introduce new subjects into the education system as a whole and in this way to differentiate the content. In that case, it was a relatively far-reaching reform of the education system, where individual adaptation traditionally took place by means of different students starting and finishing their education in different stages or in different form years. What the Education Commission was attempting to introduce was a new dimension in education, with different areas of focus within one and the same form year, in practice extending the points of entry and exit at all levels of education – elementary school, upper school and university. Perhaps the most radical proposal in this way was to waive the requirement for Latin in order to gain entrance to higher education.

Figure 1. Graphic representation of traditional and differentiated education in relation to study time. Shorter, horizontal lines indicate possible points of entry and exit

⁵⁵ 'Project til en förbättrad och förnyad Förordning för Scholar och Gymnasier', 5004.



On the cards in particular was that a differentiation of traditional education was intended to increase its attractiveness to larger groups of pupils and students. However, these efforts do not appear to have been sufficient to turn around the 18th century's waning student trends at elementary school, upper school and university. At upper school there was a dramatic decline by as much as 70 per cent. The number of students at Uppsala also fell during the Age of Liberty, from around 1,000 in the 1740s to fewer than 800 in the 1750s, between 500 and 600 in the 1770s and approximately 400 in the 1780s.⁵⁶ The proportion of Uppsala students on an ecclesiastical course fell even more. During the Age of Liberty the figure was approximately half, by the start of the 19th century it had fallen to 35–40 per cent.⁵⁷ The proportion of clergy members' sons who studied, particularly in Uppsala, fell from 40 per cent at the beginning of the 18th century to 25 per cent by the end of the century. The fact is the waning interest in studying on the part of sons of clergy members was the main reason for the drop in student numbers at Uppsala during the 18th century.⁵⁸ All this at a time where there was a continuous increase in the population, from 1.75 million in the mid-1700s to 2.35 million by the end of the century, a growth of just over 35

⁵⁶ Löfberg, 362–364; Lindroth, 31, 72.

⁵⁷ Bo Lindberg, *De lärdes modersmål: Latin, humanism och vetenskap i 1700-talets Sverige* [The Scholars' Mother Tongue: Latin, Humanism and Science in 18th Century Sweden], Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis: Gothenburg Studies in the History of Science and Ideas 5 (Göteborg, 1984), 42.

⁵⁸ Sven-Erik Åström, 'Studentfrekvensen vid de svenska universiteten under 1700-talet' ['Student Attendance at the Swedish Universities in the 18th Century'], *Historisk tidskrift* [Historical Journal], 69 (1949), 1–25, p. 21; Lindroth, 35.

per cent.⁵⁹ In Turku and Lund, there was admittedly an opposite trend. However, historian Sven-Erik Åström, who has studied the student numbers, has nevertheless maintained that ‘the cultural lag, which was inherent in the official educational institutions, must have been one of the reasons for the decline in their attendance’.⁶⁰ Lindroth indicates shorter study times as a consequence of the new graduate degree, and more private teachers, as alternative explanations in addition to the fact that fewer were following the ecclesiastical route, instead opting for bourgeois professions that did not require university studies to the same extent.⁶¹

Despite the meagre return, however, the Education Commission’s continual and consistent endeavour to achieve differentiation can be viewed as an early herald for future education debates. In that case, it was a matter of accepting increased social specialisation and differentiating the education system accordingly. In this sense, the work of the Education Commission was an important harbinger for the 19th century’s disputes over Latin and the 20th century’s curriculum debates.⁶²

Conclusions

One aspect of the Education Commission’s work that has not previously attracted attention is the continuity with which it argued for differentiated education programmes, irrespective of whether this related to new academic constitutions or school ordinances. The dividing up of the Education Commission’s work is consequently a reconstruction after the event. It is true that the work was conducted in two different committees. But the proposals that were put forward were surprisingly uniform, also bearing in mind that a whole ten years had passed between the committees’ two proposals. Few if any other attempts to reform the traditional Swedish education system have

⁵⁹ With regard to the causes of the ‘demographic transition’ in Sweden, see Tommy Bengtsson & Rolf Ohlsson, ‘Sveriges befolkning—myter och verklighet’ [‘Sweden’s Population – Myths and Reality’], in Birgitta Furuhausen (ed.), Äventyret Sverige. En ekonomisk och social historia [A Swedish Adventure: An Economic and Social History] (Stockholm, 1993), 113–132.

⁶⁰ Åström, 18.

⁶¹ Lindroth, 31. With regard to private education, see Magnus von Platen, Privatinformation i skolan: En undervisningshistorisk studie [Private Information in the School: A Study of Education History], Acta Universitatis Umensis: Umeå Studies in the Humanities 34 (Umeå, 1981).

⁶² Gunnar Richardson, Kulturkamp och klasskamp: Ideologiska och sociala motsättningar i svensk skol- och kulturpolitik under 1880-talet [Cultural Struggle and Class Struggle: Ideological and Social Clashes in Swedish Education and Cultural Policy in the 1880s], Studia Historica Gothoburgensia II (Göteborg, 1963); Gunnar Herrström, 1927 års skolreform: En studie i svensk skolpolitik 1918-1927 [1927 School Reform: A Study of Swedish School Policy 1918–1927], Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis: Studia Historica Upsaliensia XXIII (Stockholm, 1966); Bengt Thelin, Exit eforus: Läroverkens sekularisering och striden om kristendomsundervisningen [Exit Ephorus: The Secularisation of Grammar Schools and the Dispute Concerning Religious Instruction] (Stockholm, 1981); Daniel Lövheim, Att inteckna framtiden: Läroplansdebatter gällande naturvetenskap, matematik och teknik i svenska allmänna läroverk 1900-1965 [Securing the Future: Curriculum Debates Concerning Science, Mathematics and Technology in Swedish Secondary Schools 1900–1965], Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala Studies in History of Ideas 33 (Uppsala, 2006).

tackled the issue so broadly while maintaining the focus so well. In fact, the Education Commission did not have two aspects, as has been presumed in earlier historical writings on its activities, but one.

The results of the Commission's efforts to introduce new subjects in order to differentiate school, upper school and university can hardly have impressed people at the time. However, even though the ice was not broken with regard to, e.g. questioning Latin as a language of instruction and the faculty of theology's position as the most senior faculty at the university, there was nevertheless a weakening. Because through the Education Commission, alternatives were introduced to the classical educational content that characterised large parts of the traditional education system long into the 20th century. There is certainly no doubt that these alternatives would have been adopted into the education system later. In particular, this would without doubt have occurred through foreign influences. However, as the work of the Education Commission was a consistent, coherent and politically organised attempt to achieve differentiation through the introduction of new subjects at all stages of education, the Swedish education system was subjected to a powerful attempt to bring about change relatively early, even in an international comparison.

In the light of Cavalli-Sforza's ideas regarding the fact that the transfer of knowledge between or within generations in a culture characterises its inclination to change, the Education Commission's attempt to introduce more subjects in order to differentiate education is even more significant. In the long run, differentiation of education, one of the most culturally conservative institutions we know in Western society, entails the heterogenisation of the information that is transferred between generations. But not only that; taking Cavalli-Sforza's ideas as a starting point, a heterogenisation of the very education system – i.e. one of our most important systems for the transfer of information from older to younger generations – is of strategic importance for society's inclination to change in general. The Education Commission's differentiation ideas created a breeding ground for greater social dynamics in the longer term. (Similar endeavours to achieve differentiation are currently taking place in the field of family formation, probably an even more important agent for the vertical or inter-generational transfer of information in Western culture than the education system. Heterogenisation here can potentially form the basis for even greater social dynamics in the longer term.)

All of this means that the Education Commission must be viewed as the mercantilists' most important ideological instrument for implanting thoughts of change, despite the fact that exceedingly few people came into contact with schools, upper schools or universities at this time. The work of differentiating traditional education can also be said to have been continued by the

Education Committees between 1812–1825 and 1825–1829. For both the original Commission and the subsequent Committees, it was a matter of trying to differentiate education programmes in order thereby to create space for the specialisation and division of work that generally tends to be associated with modern society's conditions. Even today, attempts are continually being made to introduce new subjects into the curricula of compulsory schools, upper schools and universities. The latest such attempt relates to entrepreneurship, a project that is run by the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement and Nutek (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth).⁶³

Ultimately, the attempts to differentiate the education system can be understood in class terms, with the endeavours of a flourishing middle class to gain control of the formal side of education, which since the days of Catholicism in Sweden had been exercised by a priesthood majority that had safeguarded faith and morals just as well as their own privileges. Sven-Eric Liedman has described this bourgeois passion for the new natural science both on the basis of its material use in order to increase production and trade, as well as its ideological importance, where quantities in the form of dimensions and weight were put forward at the expense of the Church's and the aristocracy's Aristotelian emphasis on qualities.⁶⁴ In Sweden during the Age of Liberty, where the royal autocracy was replaced with a bourgeois state's powerful estates, the reformed Church had already been placed under the supervision of the state authority, which hence also controlled the universities. In this way, there were greater opportunities for a middle class, with the aid of the state's power, to differentiate education in order to better fit a society with specialisation and division of work. The Education Commission, with its important group of key Hat Party members, set the tone for these attempts to redirect activities, at universities as well as at upper and elementary schools.

The Persistent Differentiation:

The Swedish Education Commission's Reform Work, 1724–1778

In historical research, the Swedish Education Commission in the mid-eighteenth century has had two different aspects. Firstly, it has been understood to have reformed education in elementary and upper schools through its proposals. In these cases, continental educational debates have constituted the starting point. Secondly, it has been analysed as a tool of the government for taking control of the universities. In this context, the perspective has often been political. Here,

⁶³ <<<http://www.nutek.se/sb/d/230/a/720>>>, accessed on 3 April 2007.

⁶⁴ Liedman, 23–24.

the aim is to bring together these two aspects of the Commission's work in order to give a more accurate portrayal of its problems and solutions, closely linked as they were in the 18th century, broken up only by subsequent historical analysis. Both educational and political perspectives influenced the primary purpose of the Commission, which was to make suggestions for differentiation at all levels of education: primary, secondary as well as tertiary. A closer analysis of the Commission's two aspects thus merges them into one. The alternatives introduced by the Commission in order to differentiate education were the sciences, such as natural history, as well as husbandry. Its proposals for alternatives in order to achieve differentiation resulted in the establishment of the positions in the debate on education throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.