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**European Conference on Educational Research (ECER), 10-12  
September 2008, Gothenburg, Sweden**

**Post-Graduate and New Researchers' Pre-Conference**

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Citation for the published paper:

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Sweden (Lpo94)**

**URL: <http://www.ipd.gu.se/english/ecer2008>**

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**Compulsory School Curricula of  
South Africa (RNCS, 2002) and Sweden (Lpo94).**

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September 2008

## **Compulsory School Curricula of South Africa (RNCS<sup>1</sup>, 2002) and Sweden (Lpo<sup>2</sup>94).**

### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse the compulsory school curricula of South Africa and Sweden. It focuses on contexts for their introduction, main actors in the process, democratic values they contain and their similarities and differences. Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used for analysis.

The curricula and references to other literatures show similarities and differences. Contextual similarities are that both countries were once under oppression and their masses were isolated from the education process and more resources were invested on their elites. At present the curricula of both countries strives for democratic education. A major difference is equal opportunities for the students to attend a school of their choice are higher in Sweden than in South Africa. The Swedish curriculum is more concrete on issues related to students, teachers and other school staff's rights and responsibilities, and on relations between school, home and society.

Key words: South Africa, Sweden, Curricula, and Democratic values

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<sup>1</sup>RNCS (Revised National Curriculum Statement).

<sup>2</sup>Läroplan för det obligatoriska skolväsendet, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet (Curriculum for the Compulsory School System, the Pre-School Class and the Leisure-time Centre, original in Swedish).

## Introduction

This paper is a part of a dissertation project on South Africa's school curriculum, specifically Life Orientation education. The social development aspect of Life Orientation education, considers democratic values, social justice and constitutional rights and obligations of citizens. As a basic background to the dissertation, instead of direct starting with a learning area, I will assess the basic democratic aspects in the South African compulsory school curriculum. Due to continuous efforts for democratic education reform and a similar nine years compulsory education, the Swedish compulsory school curriculum will be compared with the South Africa's. The comparison will give a glimpse of historical developments of education systems but mainly focus on the present day curricula.

### *The South African Education System*

Even if it is clear that the different ethnic groups had their own traditional socialisation mechanism, the ground for formal education was laid after the arrival of the European settler in 1652 in the Cape. First the settlers administration and later on the Dutch Reformed Church widely undertook a work of providing schools. The schooling at this time mainly focused on religious teaching to introduce learners to Christian prayers, to enable them to read the holy writings. The first schools run by the local authorities were not segregated by race (Christie: 1986).

After the British took over a larger part of South Africa, the school system was more organised and in 1839 they established a department of education (Ibid.). The British wanted their language and culture to dominate the system, which was resisted by Dutch settlers. This conflict was resolved by an education reform in 1910 that gave equal status to both Dutch and English<sup>3</sup>.

Following the end of the Second World War in 1948, when the Nationalist Party won the election, the party introduced a special policy on education. The designers of the apartheid system decided that the education system should be segregated. Education should be given separately for the people they divided by race, as white, coloured, Indian and black and they emphasised that they would not accept mixing of people by any means (Ashley, 1989).

Based on the philosophy of apartheid new school acts were instated. The Bantu Education Act (1953), Coloured Persons Education Act (1963), Indian Education Act (1965) and National Educational Policy Act (to define the white education system) (1967) were the major policy acts. Different laws were also passed to establish universities for the different groups. One such law was Extension of University Act (1959) to decide where the black African population should attend university education. Similar decisions on separate universities for the other groups were also introduced later.

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<sup>3</sup> According to Dr. W.J. Viljoen, who attended the Imperial Education Conference in London in 1923 as delegate of the Union of South Africa, equal treatment of the two languages was one of the necessary preconditions for accepting from both sides the founding of the Republic of South Africa in 1910. The ruling Europeans and natives as well as their languages were not considered as equals. Dr. Viljoen, says, "...both the English and the Dutch races of South Africa were noted for their virility, their love of freedom and their determination". On the other hand one of the five main principles of the union he quote on the meeting says "4. The extension of the necessary protection and aid to the subordinate races; ..." (Viljoen, 1923).

The Soweto uprising of the 1976 and other internal and external protests against the apartheid regime, made the rulers realise that their oppression of the majority of the population could not continue as it was. These protests forced the government to come up with improved policies on education in the 1980s. The fall of apartheid in the beginning of 1990s opened a new era in the education system.

Post-apartheid South Africa needed a new constitution, new laws and major institutional changes to meet the need for equality and participation among its citizens. Following the fall of apartheid came also new school laws, policies and curricula. The major ones among them were the National Curriculum Statement of 1997 and the Revised National Curriculum Statement of 2002.

### *The Swedish Education System*

The Swedish education system can trace back its root to the introduction of Christianity around 1100<sup>4</sup>. The Catholic Church was mainly responsible for education of the people through its functionary. Teaching reading and some basic prayers entrusted on parents or the father in the family (Richardson, 1994).

The church divided the country into diocese (stift) and parishes (forsamling) and the education also followed these geographical areas. Formal education was given in cities with cathedrals and in different monasteries. Reading, writing, Latin, knowledge of Christianity and song were some parts of these studies. Priests and other church functionary got their professional education in these cathedrals and monasteries.

When Sweden had its first school law in 1571, which was written by Bishop Laurentius Petri, the education was under the total control of the church, the focus was on knowledge of Christianity and Latin (Marklund, 1997). When the next law came in 1611, the main role for its appearing was played by Johannes Rudbeckius, a Bishop and Professor in mathematics, Hebrew and theology (Ibid). More curricula or school laws were introduced in the following centuries, among them the 1842 school law.

There was a continuous struggle between the conservatives and liberals from 1809 to 1842 on questions related to introducing of obligatory education for the whole population. Bishop Esaias Tegner, a representative of the conservative line believed that learning to read and write could be recommended but not compulsory and he concludes that subjects such as geography and history are not necessary for ordinary people (Isling, 1980: 68-96)<sup>5</sup>. He argued that, essential elements for people's education is knowledge of Christianity; for this purpose all children should be taught to read in order to be able to gain knowledge of Christianity. On the other hand Bishop Carl Adolf Agardh, a representative for liberal views, warned that if the masses are not allowed to attend education, the existing poverty in combination with illiteracy could lead to a revolution (Ibid.).

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<sup>4</sup> Due to longer history of education and access to documents, I used more Swedish materials for the article compared to South Africa's.

<sup>5</sup> He divided society in two classes, the working people such as farmers, handicraftsmen and traders; and public servants such as judges, government officials, priests and scholars. He believed that as working people are dealing with their own business they should take care of their own education and the state should care for the education of the public servants.

As the result of the radical wind of the 1830s many earlier conservatives changed side. Tegner and other leading conservatives such as Johan Olof Wallin joined the liberal camp. Even the then crown prince Oscar, supported the struggle for mass education. The 1842 school law is the result of this continuous effort and struggle (Ibid.).

The 1842 school law introduced for the first time an obligatory elementary school (Folkskolan) for all citizens. While the elementary school was for the ordinary people there was a grammar school (läroverk), for the male elite of the country. There was a parallel school system in the country, and as a result of this the ones who were attending elementary school (Folkskolan) and grammar school (läroverk) had some school years parallel<sup>6</sup> but in schools with different qualities.

As the Swedish society for many centuries was divided by different socio-economic classes needs of education also varied accordingly. The poor rural population was isolated from different services including education. Tenants and other propertyless poor people of the society were not allowed to vote. The four Estates<sup>7</sup> with the right to vote and with their own parliamentary representatives were the Estate of the Nobility, the Estate of the Clergy, the Estate of the Burghers and the Estate of the Peasantry (Metcalf, 1987). Because of their communication with businessmen outside the country the Burghers wanted to have knowledge of dealing with them, in order to satisfy these needs they started to open schools in the cities (Richardson, 1994).

The aristocrats and other high-class families were not interested in sending their children to elementary schools ("Folkskola") in general and if they at all were sending their children to school they sent them to grammar schools ("läroverk") after teachers employed in their families give them some private instruction at home. In addition to questions related to the quality of education, classrooms with high number of students, bad sanitary and hygienic conditions were reasons given not to send their children to these schools (Ibid.). According to Isling, these schools were considered to be poor peoples schools ("fattigskola"). The poor and manual workers attended them, in the rural areas farmers and their manual workers and in the cities craftsmen and other lower class people were attending them (Isling, 1974).

As the result of this division of society in different classes' children were given different educational opportunities and this consequently led to starting of some movements for achieving a common elementary school for all children ("Allmän bottenskola"). In this struggle the conservative groups such as the church and the aristocrats stood against the idea of government and municipalities taking responsibility for citizen education. According to them the responsibility of the state should be teaching only Christianity but the main task of teaching children should lay on their families. In addition to that they expressed their fear that the general education for the masses would contribute to less respect for law and order among the ordinary people (Richardson, 1994).

In the 1880s the left wing politicians, the liberals and the social democrats initiated and supported the idea of common schools. One of the right wing opposing group's main

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<sup>6</sup> If we take just an example, elementary schools (Folkskolan) are 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade while grammar schools (läroverk) are 3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Both schools have 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grades running parallel.

<sup>7</sup> Metcalf says in a preface of a book on parliament, "...it should be noted that the term "estate" – as "the estate of the nobility" – refers to the "estate-in-society," while the term "Estate" – as in "the Estate of Nobility" – refers to one of the four corporate bodies that together constituted the Swedish Riksdag (parliament) from the 1520's until 1866".

arguments against it was that the elementary school (“Folkskola”) quality was very low and could not allow students to get to grammar (“läroverk”). The left wing was claiming that it was not fair not to give equal opportunities to all children. If all children were to attend the same school for some years that would help to bridge the wide gape between the different groups in society’s upper and lower classes (Ibid.).

One of the leading liberal school politicians in the 1880s Fridtjov Berg, considered school problem as a social problem. He considered the conflict between the upper and lower classes of the society almost like a conflict between two races<sup>8</sup>. He said:

...As one with an experience can understand, it must be admitted what a suspicious relationship exists between the higher and lower classes in our country; they usually look at each other as two hostile races, one as a master and the other one as subdued... (My translation, Berg, in Isling, 1974, pp. 33-34)<sup>9</sup>.

The 1842 school law marked the state responsibility for citizens’ education. In 1878 the obligatory school was divided in to classes to cover 6 years. In 1936 came another law that made the 7<sup>th</sup> school year obligatory. Later on, the Swedish parliament decided in 1950 to establish one comprehensive and compulsory school of 9 years, in which all groups of children from different parallel schools were supposed to attend. In 1962 the 9 years obligatory schooling was officially declared and a curriculum for the compulsory school was introduced.

### **Aims/Purpose**

After providing a general historical background of the curriculum development in the two countries, I will try to answer questions, which I consider are relevant for this study. The questions are first what are the educational contexts in which compulsory school curricula were introduced in these countries? Second, which were the main actors in this process? Third, what major democratic values are reflected in the present curriculum and how are they supposed to be implemented? Finally, what basic similarities and differences can be observed in both the curriculum documents and realities of the two countries?

Answering these questions will hopefully help the reader to understand, what the focal points are on socialising democratic citizens in the two countries. In addition it can help for understanding the actors who were involved in the processes of curriculum development, the struggle between them as well as the strength and weaknesses of their achievements. The comparison part in addition to its provision of limited knowledge of the two countries education systems, could also allow the systems to learn from each other.

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<sup>8</sup> This was a time when racial differences are very much emphasised.

<sup>9</sup> ”...Den som av erfarenhet vet, vilken ömsesidig misstro som råder mellan de högre och lägre klasserna i vårt land, måste erkänna; att de alltför ofta betrakta varandra som två fientliga raser, en härskande och en underkuvad...” (Berg, I Isling, 1974).

## **Method**

To be able to study about democratic values in the curricula, I will choose some sample texts from both South African “Revised National Curriculum statement, Grades R-9 (Schools) Policy, 2002” and the Swedish “Curriculum for the compulsory school system, the pre-school and the leisure time centre, Lpo 94”. These samples will be analysed in the light of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Norman Fairclough.

The analysis will look at both the texts and conditions and processes or context and interactions that contribute to its production and interpretation (Fairclough, 1989). Fairclough discusses the ‘external’ and ‘internal’ relations of text. While the ‘internal relations’ mainly focuses on semantical, grammatical and vocabulary relations the ‘external relations’ focuses on what happens outside the text (Fairclough, 2003). He rises that ‘formal features’ of a text has experiential, relational and expressive values (Fairclough, 1989); which he also relates to a systems of knowledge and belief; social relations and social identities (selves) (Fairclough, 1992). According to him the use of these analytical components will help to understand ideological and hegemonic effects of a text.

## **The context for introduction of compulsory school curriculum**

### *South Africa*

The South African education system before and during apartheid years was characterised by inequality and discriminative diversity. The following paragraph from the background part of the Revised National Curriculum Statement will provide a brief understanding of the situation.

South Africa’s democratic government inherited a divided and unequal system of education. Under apartheid, South Africa had nineteen different educational departments separated by race, geography and ideology. This education system prepared children in different ways for the positions they were expected to occupy in social, economic and political life under apartheid. In each department, the curriculum played a powerful role in reinforcing inequality. What, how and whether children were taught differed according to the roles they were expected to play in the wider society.

Curriculum change in post-apartheid South Africa started immediately after the election in 1994 when the National Education and Training Forum began a process of Syllabus revision and subject rationalisation. The purpose of this process was mainly to lay the foundations for a single national core syllabus. In addition to the rationalisation and consolidation of existing syllabi, the National Education and Training Forum curriculum developers removed overtly racist and other insensitive language from existing syllabi. For the first time curriculum decisions were made in a participatory and representative manner. But this process was not, nor did it intended to be, a curriculum development process. (RNCS, 2002:4)

The South African state that came to power through election in 1994 was the first in the history of the country to introduce democracy. The country was for three centuries under



various forms of colonialism and for half a century under apartheid. Lack of experience in democratic working tradition in the country and expectation on the newly emerged democratic South Africa by the outside world were in collusion course.

After the end of apartheid the education sector was gathered under one ministry and one department of education. There are nine provincial departments of education. These departments have the responsibility of administering and monitoring the implementation of educational policies and curricula.

The decision to have a 9 years compulsory school for the whole nation came in 1996 (Act 27, 1996). The first curriculum for compulsory school came in 1997 and it was a divided document including Foundation Phase (Grades R-3), Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6) and Senior Phase (Grades 7-9). With the involvement and participation of ministerial committees, education department officials and finally with about 150 educationalists the curriculum was revised. The draft of the Revised National Curriculum statement was ready in 2001 and it was released for public comments for three months, then with the inclusion of public comments and hearing in the parliament it was approved and released in 2002. The new document is not divided by phase; it is rather one general summary document with eight additional addenda for the eight learning areas.

### *Sweden*

In Sweden as it was mentioned in the introduction there were different school systems. The school systems served different strata of the society. Before the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the majority of the population was isolated from the political decision making process and the education system<sup>10</sup>. This included children of poor farmers and other lower classes in general.

Religious education for the purpose of control was allowed since quite a long time ago. A church law from 1686 instates that without consideration of sex and social position all should learn reading from the small catechism before taking the Holy Communion (Wernersson, 1977). Except this obligatory religious teaching, girls were isolated from other forms of schooling and the first girls schools were initiated and run by private bodies. The first girls school in the country was opened in Gothenburg in 1786; and in general it took a long time for girls schools to get support from the state (Ibid.) It was in the 1870s these schools started getting government support (Richardson, 1994). According to Kyle cited by Wernersson, between 1871 and 1900 among the grammar schools (läroverk) students, 10-15% were boys with working class family background while girls with the same background in these schools were 1-4 % (Wernersson, 1977)<sup>11</sup>. Even in the teaching profession the first law that allowed

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<sup>10</sup> Englund says, "...Even at the turn of the century large groups of people were deprived of a complete, full-time elementary school education. The content of instruction formed part of a more or less feudally inspired inculcation of religious subordination, and at that time elementary schools were very much blind alley. Alongside the elementary schools there were other types of school for those subsequently to assume positions of power and control in society. The conservative view of education for the masses held by those in power was that prolonged education was unnecessary and that such education as was provided should have the basic aim of teaching religious subservience" (Englund, 1986:259).

<sup>11</sup> According to Isling, in the years between 1914 and 1945, 70% of boys born in a priest, physician and officer families completed high school, while only 5% of children in working class background families. There were also screening programmes before children start junior secondary, high school and university, this also gave

women to teach came in 1856 and two years later in 1858 the first law that allowed unmarried women to be legally recognised at the age of 25 passed (Marklund, 1997). Before that unmarried women had no legal status.

Obligatory school for all was introduced in 1842. Since then there was a continuous struggle to replace the different types of parallel schools into one common school for all. The idea of taking away the lower classes of the grammar school (läroverk) to combine it with elementary school (folkskola) was challenged by grammar school teachers and right wing academicians because they believed that the elementary school lower classes couldn't keep the high standard of grammar schools lower classes (Richardson, 1994). This struggle reached its peak in the 1880s when the social democrats and other liberal groups together fought to end the parallel system, which gave more opportunities for children coming from high status families. Already in 1894 there was decision to have 9 years grammar school (läroverk) based on the third year of elementary school (Folkskola) (Marklund, 1974).

In 1909 a law was passed for all men to vote. The time after the First World War brought more democratic reforms in Sweden. In 1921 came another law that allowed for all women to vote. These laws started opening a way for education reforms too.

By using different educational conceptions, Englund divided the curriculum reform periods in to three. The first was from the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1920s, which he calls a time for "patriarchal educational conception." This time was known for different reforms, first for the struggle of the liberals and social democrats that assumed power between 1917-1920 and fought for the common basic education that also led to the curriculum reform of 1919. He also mentions the 1920s where the conservative forces tried to halt the progress in this direction. In the 1920s this conception of education focused on nation, nationalism and "painting favourable picture of nation." The second period with a start in the 1940s after the Second World War was represented by "a scientific – rational educational conception." As Englund quoted from two governmental reports in 1940s, the main focus was that education should be based "on free research and free public opinion", "citizens own insights and wishes", and "objective scientific foundations." The third period was characterised by "a democratic educational conception" which started in the 1960s to continue in the followed decades. This period and the conception focused on such important issues such as, strengthening the sectors of society with low resources, distributional questions, and education as resources to improve quality of life, active involvement of citizens in societal activities, etc. The Social Democratic Party and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) played a vital role in this process (Englund, 1986: pp.253-295).

Since then there were different education curricula introduced in 1962, in 1969, in 1980 and in 1994. Even though there was a decision in 1950 to introduce a compulsory nine years school, the compulsory school curriculum was introduced in 1962. This ended officially the parallel school system and it was known for starting to focus on the individual child instead of social categories.

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advantage to children of higher social groups. Cities with high schools had a clear advantage over the rural areas without such schools (Isling, 1974).

## **The major actors in the process**

### *South Africa*

In South Africa there was a political struggle within and outside the country for over a century to end first the colonial rule and later the rule of apartheid. There were different mass organisations, churches and political organisations that fought against apartheid. One of the major forces in this struggle was the ANC, which also had a vision on education. ANC started its own education programme for its members in exile. Between 1977 and 1992 ANC established and ran schools in places called Mazimbu and Dakawa in Tanzania. The programme included nursery, primary, secondary and vocational schools as well as an adult education programme. For those who qualified for tertiary education there was Solomon Mahlangu<sup>12</sup> Freedom College in the area while others were sent to different countries for scholarship ([www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/speeches/2007/sp0406.htm](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/speeches/2007/sp0406.htm) 080722).

After 1994 ANC provided its vision of the future South African education in a draft document called, A Policy Framework for Education and Training (ANC, 1994). ANC cooperated with different progressive groups in the country and also with the bureaucrats of the old regime in the department of education for curriculum development. The bureaucrats of the department of education by this time were well aware of inevitability of reform. According to Chisholm, in the process that resulted RNCS 2002, vocational lobbies; environmental and history interest groups; intellectuals; Non-Governmental Organisations; teachers unions; and religious groups were involved (Chisholm,2005).

### *Sweden*

Since the first curriculum for comprehensive schools in 1962, experiences were gained and three consequent curricula for comprehensive schools were introduced. During these process a large number of politicians, trade union leaders, researchers and people from other walks of life were involved.

In the process of curriculum development, idea can come from the government (proposition) or the parliament (motion). Usually expert groups are given assignment to deal with the idea and come up with some proposal (betänkande) to the government. Even if politicians give the final decision there is tradition of using available pedagogical research and consulting professionals with the knowledge and experience in the field (Lundgren, 2002).

The government distributes the draft (betänkande) by experts to different stakeholders to comment on it. As ca 50% of the Swedish population is involved in a daily base in the education sector; as student, teacher, researcher and other staff, there is a very high interest from the mass media to inform the public on proposals, discussions and decisions on education (Lindensjö & Lundgren, 2005). In this stage as the document is official even individual citizens can comment on it. Municipalities, educational institutions, trade unions, political parties, and different interest groups are the main actors on giving their opinion before the final draft is presented to the government or parliament to be given as a curriculum.

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<sup>12</sup> Solomon Mahlangu was a 23 years old student activist of ANC sentenced to death and executed by South African apartheid regime in 1979.

## **Democratic values reflected in the curricula**

### *South Africa*

Under the subtitle in the curriculum “Constitution, Values, Nation building and the Curriculum” are provided “the basis for curriculum transformation and development” from the constitution of South Africa (Act No 108 of 1996). These are:

- Heal the division of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.
- Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person.
- Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which Government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law.
- Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations. (RNCS, 2002:7)

The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (Department of Education, 2001) identifies ten<sup>13</sup> fundamental values of the constitution. These are:

- Democracy
- Social Justice and Equity
- Non-Racism and Non-Sexism
- Ubuntu (Human Dignity)
- An Open Society
- Accountability (Responsibility)
- Respect
- The Rule of Law
- Reconciliation (Ibid.).

The Manifesto further identifies 16 strategies for familiarising young South Africans with the values of the Constitution. These strategies find expression in the Revised National Curriculum Statements and include:

- Nurturing a culture of communication and participation in school.
- Role-modelling: promoting commitment as well as competence amongst educators.
- Ensuring that every South African is able to read, write, count and think.
- Infusing the classroom with the culture of human rights.
- Making Arts and Culture part of the curriculum.
- Putting history back into the curriculum.
- Learning about the rich diversity of cultures, beliefs and worldviews within which the unity of South Africa is manifested.
- Making multilingualism happen.
- Using sport to shape social bonds and nurture nation-building at schools.
- Ensuring equal access to education.
- Promoting anti-racism in schools.
- Freeing the potential of girls as well as boys.

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<sup>13</sup> In the Revised National Curriculum Statement, the official document only nine of the ten values are mentioned, probably as a result of printing error. The missed fundamental value is 'equality'.

- Dealing with HIV/AIDS and nurturing a culture of sexual and social responsibility.
- Making schools safe to learn and teach in and ensure the rule of law.
- Promoting ethics and the environment.
- Nurturing the new patriotism, or affirming a common citizenship. (RNCS, 2002:7-8).

The ten identified fundamental values of the constitution and the 16 strategies for familiarising them with young South Africans are very important. But it should be noticed that the absence of strategy directly dealing with social justice among the lists of 16 strategies. Even if equal access to education were mentioned in general the questions on inequality and issues related to poverty would have been interesting to see them among strategies.

The verbs used in the beginning of the sentences for the 16 strategies are used in different frequencies. *Making* is used three times while the verbs *nurturing*, *ensuring*, and *promoting* are used twice each. The verbs *role-modelling*, *infusing*, *learning*, *using*, *putting*, *freeing*, and *dealing with* are used once each.

It could be relevant here to consider some examples and comment on how some of these verbs are used in sentences.

Ex. 1 “infusing the classroom with the culture of human rights”. The word infusing could mean introduction, which can weakly express the need of using human rights as a guiding principle for classroom activities. This is better explained in the original document, Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy<sup>14</sup>.

Ex. 2 “promoting anti-racism in schools”. Promoting which can have its source in business is quite a weak word to serve this purpose. “promoting anti-racism” is not wrong but racism needs to be fought. Active resistance and struggle against racism can give better results than only “promoting anti-racism”. The Manifesto uses stronger words such as “fighting racism,” “racism is unacceptable,” etc.

Ex. 3 “Freeing the potential of girls as well as boys”. It is rather confusing to use the clause “Freeing the potential...” in this strategic question as if the problem is hindrance of the girls and boys potential. The question is much bigger than that. Girls are in most cases, traditionally hindered from attending school. According to the Manifesto, boys and men are in the society and schools more favoured than girls and women. Girls are not encouraged to take some subjects considered to have more value, women teach subjects with low status and occupy low positions in school administrations. Among the illiterate of the country more than 60% are women. The statement would have been stronger to clearly indicate the struggle that is needed for equal access and equal treatment.

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<sup>14</sup> “infusing schools with the culture of human rights means not only teaching learners to reject all forms of discrimination, but rejecting it in practice, too. It means making sure that children are treated with equal opportunity, regardless of whether they are black or white, male or female, rich or poor.” (DOE, 2001:36).

Ex.4 In the middle of the lists "...nation-building at schools"<sup>15</sup> is mentioned and the beginning of the last sentence in the list says, "Nurturing the new patriotism..." It is understandable that South Africa needs to hold together and keep its unity after all the divisions and separations it experienced for centuries. On the other hand the question is, is it up to the school to build a nation? What is the "new patriotism"? and which one is the "old patriotism"?<sup>16</sup> One very important and relevant question is what will be its long-range consequences?

In a part of one of the learning areas, Life Orientation education there is a focus on gradually introducing democratic values, but emphasis is given to the importance of including democratic values in all areas of education.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement seeks to embody these values in the knowledge and skills it develops. It encourages amongst all learners an awareness and understanding of the rich diversity of cultures, beliefs and world views within which the unity of South Africa is manifested. (RNCS, 2002:8).

The same emphasis on the need to reflect democratic values within all fields was again raised in another place within the curriculum.

... The Revised National Curriculum Statement has tried to ensure that all Learning Area Statements reflect the principles and practices of social justice, respect for the environment and human rights as defined in the constitution. In particular, the curriculum attempts to be sensitive to issues of poverty, inequality, race, gender, age, disability, and such challenges as HIV/AIDS. (RNCS, 2002:10).

Even if the then Minister of Education Kader Asmal in the preface of the document emphasised the need for "commitment and cooperation of ...Government, parents, teachers, learners, and the community at large..." the curriculum focused on teachers and students (RNCS, 2002).

Under the subtitle on "the learner" the focus is not only on what the learner gains for her/himself but also what South Africa should benefit from the process is emphasised. Developing potential of each learner as well as helping the learner to be critical and active citizen is mentioned.

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<sup>15</sup> "At the more intimate level, this manifests as a loyalty to one's school, to its values, its symbols, its members, its sports teams, its progress and future, its well-being.

In the broader environment, it manifests as what might be called "patriotism"; a loyalty to one's country, its values, its symbols and anthem, its sport teams, its place in Africa and world, its progress and future, its well-being" (Ibid: 77)

<sup>16</sup> "At the core of patriotism is a sense of obligation to one's school, one's community, one's country – the very opposite of the kind of narrow patriotism of the past, predicated upon, and perpetrating, the subjugation or denial of others.

The New Patriotism is forged through a common adherence to the constitutional values of democracy, equality, social justice, non-sexism, non-racism accountability, openness, ubuntu, respect, reconciliation and the rule of law: through cherishing the values upon which our society is built – the values of openness, discussion, debate, dialogue, and the acknowledgement of difference." (Ibid.).

The teacher is expected to have a control and mastery of the different areas of education. To be an expert, a leader, an administrator, a manager, etc. There is no direct indication of the need for qualification of facilitating exchange of both knowledge and experience between teachers and learners.

*Sweden*

Lpo 94 begins with:

### **Fundamental Values**

Democracy forms the basis of the national school system. The Education Act (1985:1100) stipulates that all school activities should be carried out in accordance with fundamental democratic values and that each and everyone working in the school should encourage respect for the intrinsic values of each person as well as for the environment we all share (Chapter 1, §2).

The school has the important task of imparting, instilling and forming in pupils those fundamental values on which our society is based.

The inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men and solidarity with the weak and vulnerable are all values that the school should represent and impart. In accordance with the ethics borne by Christian tradition and Western humanism, this is achieved by fostering in the individual a sense of justice, generosity of spirit, tolerance and responsibility.

Education in the school shall be non-denominational.

The task of the school is to encourage all pupils to discover their own uniqueness as individuals and thereby actively participate in social life by giving of their best in responsible freedom. (Lpo94:3).

In the second part of the Lpo 94 is written:

### **2.1 Norms and Values**

The school should actively and consciously influence and stimulate pupils into embracing the common values of our society and express these in practical daily actions.

### **Goals to strive towards**

- develop their ability to consciously form and express ethical standpoints based on knowledge and personal experiences,
- respect the intrinsic values of other people,
- reject the oppression and abusive treatment of other people and assist in supporting them,
- can empathise with and understand the situation other people are in and also develop the will to act with their best interests at heart,

- show respect and care for the immediate environment as well as for the environment in a wider perspective.

### **Guidelines**

#### **All who work in the school should:**

- contribute to developing the pupils' sense of togetherness and solidarity and also to developing their sense of responsibility for people outside the immediate group.
- in their activities contribute to the school being permeated with the spirit of human solidarity and
- actively resist persecution and oppression of individuals or groups,
- show respect for the individual pupil and organise daily work in democratic ways.

#### **The teacher should:**

- clarify and discuss with the pupils the basic values of Swedish society and their consequences in terms of individual actions,
- openly present and discuss different values, ideas and problems, be observant and together with other school staff take the necessary steps to prevent and counteract all forms of abusive treatment,
- together with the pupils develop rules for working and participating in the group and
- work together with the home in the upbringing of the pupils and doing so clarify the school's norms and rules as a basis for work and co-operation in school. (Lpo94:8-9).

The following is in Lpo 94 about pupils:

### **2.3 Responsibility and Influence of Pupils**

The democratic principles of being able to influence, take responsibility and be involved should embrace all pupils. Development of pupils' knowledge and social awareness requires that they take increasingly greater responsibility for their own work as well as for their school environment and that they are also able to exercise real influence over their education. According to the Education Act, it is incumbent on all who work in the school to work for democratic working structures. (Chapter 1, §2)

#### **Goals to strive towards**

The school should strive to ensure that all pupils:

- take personal responsibility for their studies and working environment,
- gradually exercise increasingly greater influence over their education and the internal work of the school and
- have an understanding of democratic principles and develop their ability to work in democratic forms.

### **Guidelines**



**All who work in the school should:**

- support the pupils' ability and willingness to both influence and take responsibility for the social, cultural and physical school environment.

The teacher should:

- take as a starting point that the pupils are able and willing to take personal responsibility of their learning and work in school,
- ensure that all students, independent of social background and regardless of gender, ethnic belonging, religion or other belief, sexual orientation or disability, have true influence over the work methods, work structures, and educational content, and ensure that this influence increases as they grow in age and maturity,
- work so that boys and girls have equally great influence and participation over their education,
- be responsible for pupils being able to try different working methods and structures,
- together with the pupils plan and evaluate the teaching and
- prepare the pupils for participating in and sharing the joint responsibilities, rights and obligations that characterise a democratic society. (Lpo94 :13-14).

Despite the very important values introduced in the paragraph on fundamental values, it is surprising to have the phrase 'ethics borne by Christian tradition and Western humanism,' what does that mean? As the church and state are separate entities and as the modern education is less influenced by religion it is less relevant to include it here. There are no clarifications either for 'Christian tradition' or 'Western humanism'.

Under the subtitles norms and values and responsibility and influence of people there are different verbs used to clarify goals to strive towards and guidelines. The verbs are used in the start of a meaning or at the middle to clarify an expected action. The verb *respect* is used three times. The verbs *contribute*, *develop*, *discuss*, *responsibility*, and *understand* are used two times each. The verbs *clarify*, *emphasise*, *ensure*, *exercise*, *influence*, *organise*, *participate*, *prepare*, *present*, *reject* and *support* are used once each.

Ex.1 "show respect for the individual pupil and organise daily work in democratic ways". (Lpo94:8).

"- openly present and discuss different values, ideas and problems,  
-be observant and together with other school staff take the necessary steps to prevent and counteract all forms of abusive treatment," (Lpo94:9).

The above abstracts mainly focus on the respect the individual pupil is supposed to be given and the schools responsibility of being a democratic model in its working process. In the next abstract it is clearly presented more than creating awareness of the different values, ideas and problems the teacher is expected with the help of the staff to counter act against abusive treatments.

Ex.2 "rejects the oppression and abusive treatment of other people and assist in supporting them". (Lpo94:8).

As a general part of the norms and values all actors are expected to have the above value. This is mainly to indicate that a person is not fighting only when she/he is abused or mistreated but when it happens to other people too. The expectation is not only fight the abuse of other people it also includes helping them to get out of it.

Ex.3 “- ensure that all students, independent of social background and regardless of gender, ethnic belonging, religion or other belief, sexual orientation or disability, have true influence over the work methods, work structures, and educational content, and ensure that this influence increases as they grow in age and maturity,

- work so that boys and girls have equally great influence and participation over their education, “ (Lpo94:14).

The first part of the abstract emphasises the possibility that all students should be given on influencing the work of the school. But the differences on the level of influence are limited by “age and maturity”. Young age and less maturity provide with less influence, and gradual increases by age and maturity gives gradual more influence. The second abstract emphasis on the need to work for girls and boys equality on influencing and participation on the education they are receiving.

Ex.4 “The school should actively and consciously influence and stimulate pupils into embracing the common values of our society and express these in practical daily actions” (Lpo94:8).

“- clarify and discuss with the pupils the basic values of Swedish society and their consequences in terms of individual actions,” (Lpo94:9).

“- contribute to developing the pupils’ sense of togetherness and solidarity and also to developing their sense of responsibility for people outside the immediate group.” (Lpo94:8)

“- prepare the pupils for participating in and sharing the joint responsibilities, rights and obligations that characterise a democratic society.” (Lpo94:14).

The above four short abstracts focus on what schools and staff should try to provide children with. They are called, “common values of our society”, “basic values of Swedish Society”, and characters of “democratic society”. The focuses are on “...sense of togetherness and solidarity...sense of responsibility for people outside the immediate group” as well as “...participating in and sharing the joint responsibilities, rights and obligations...”.

In Lpo 94 the focuses are not only on pupils and teachers, schools as institution and all school staff as actors are also highly emphasised. The role of the teacher in supporting the development of pupil to adhere to democratic norms and values is emphasised. The pupils are expected “...to influence, take responsibility and be involved...” in their education and the education system. Pupils, their teacher and other staff are responsible to create a good working environment.<sup>17</sup>

Based on Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the context in which the curricula texts in both countries are produced, the actors participated in the process and the contents of

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<sup>17</sup> As it is indicated in the document, “the social, cultural and physical school environment”.

texts are discussed. In the contents of texts, democratic values, roles and practices are focused. These curricula have both similarities and differences due to various reasons such as experiences and contexts; These similarities and differences will be discussed further.

## **Similarities and differences between the curricula**

### *Similarities*

If we refer to the history of the countries, one basic similarity was that in both countries an oppressor and oppressed groups prevailed. In South Africa the oppressors were colonial masters and racist white minority groups while in Sweden the aristocrats, church representatives and others with high socio-economic status. South Africa since 1839 and Sweden since 1842 started to have formal school organisations. In both countries in general an attempt has been made to isolate the masses from attending proper education. In his book, *Native Education in South Africa*, E.H. Brooks already in 1930 wrote,

...The problem of Native education is, in essence, whatever it may seem, much more of a class problem than of a race problem; for the objections made to it are precisely the objections made to the education of the European masses during the last century. (E.H. Brooks in Cross, 1986: 190).

One important aspect of education is a resource available for its implementation. In a study conducted in South Africa in 1970s, it was found out that the government expenditure per black student was R930 while it was R3561 per white student (Enslin, 2003). If we go back 100 years and consider educational financing in Sweden it shows clear inequality. As late as 1870s government grant for grammar schools (*läroverk*) was three times higher than for elementary schools (*folkskola*), while the later is having about 50 times higher number of pupils (Richardson, 1994).

Christianity and church education laid the bases for formal education in both countries. As the Dutch settlers are the ones who brought formal education to South Africa, the origin of both education systems is Europe.

The South African and the Swedish compulsory school curricula are referring to other documents as a base for their education system, South Africa is referring to The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No 108 of 1996) and Sweden is referring to The Education Act (1985:1100); democracy is the base for education system in both countries; both countries recognise the focus of education should be the individual, fostering a critical thinking, environmental conscious learner.

### *Differences*

There are also differences between the two countries situation in general<sup>18</sup>. For the last 200 years Sweden was not in a war with any country; South Africa has a widely diverse population while Sweden had a homogenous population until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century immigration started. The level of oppression in Sweden was not as brutal as in South Africa. All men gained voting right in 1909 and all women in 1921 with that all citizens reached universal vote right in Sweden (Metcalf, 1987) while South Africans gained universal vote right in 1994. This gives Sweden a longer tradition of democracy, which its citizens experienced. End of the Second World War for Sweden was a time for hope, more democratic reform and better educational opportunities while in South Africa the start of another era of oppression, the introduction of apartheid. In Sweden democratic developments were resulted by internal struggle of liberal and democratic forces against the conservative forces while in South Africa the struggle against apartheid needed local, national and international participation.

In South Africa compulsory school curriculum reform did not need longer time, following the first curriculum, the revised curriculum came in 2002. In Sweden from inception of ideas to having a complete curriculum takes a long time. Some of the times in between are used for experimenting decisions before a general implementation. If we take as an example the decision to have a compulsory school curriculum was taken in 1950 but the first curriculum came in 1962. Seven years later came the 1969, curriculum, 11 years later the 1980 and 14 years later the 1994 curriculum.

The South African compulsory school curriculum did not needed to start from the scratch, it has benefited from international experiences in this field. The inputs of South African and experts from other countries, as well as public comments on the draft confirm both the experience and democratic base of it.

The Swedish compulsory school curriculum is very general with the focus on major principles and guidelines. In addition to the nine years schools, it includes pre-schools and leisure time centres. Education for the Swedish minority groups the Sami and education for the disabled persons are included in this curriculum.

The 1997 version of South African curriculum was divided into three phases and presented as three documents. The 2002 one is considered as one document subdivided by eight learning areas. The curriculum is referring to different documents and specifically recommends that the “Assessment Policy” and the “Language-in-Education Policy” should be read in connection with this Revised National Curriculum Statement.

Swedish curriculum does not have differences based either by subject and level of education. It is clearer on points related to gender problems and the measures to be taken for treating boys and girls. In the Swedish curriculum the focus on the individual pupil is stronger than in the South African curriculum, which divides the attention between the individual and the nation. The Swedish curriculum provides expectations and roles of the pupils, teachers, school leaders, all school employees and the community at large. It emphasises the role these parts

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<sup>18</sup> South Africa’s geographical area is three times bigger than Sweden’s and its population is five times more than the Swedish population. South Africa is 1,219, 090 Sq. Km. with population of 48.7 million (<http://www.statssa.za>, 080825) and Sweden is 450, 000 Sq. Km. with a population of 9, 182, 927 (<http://www.scb.se>, 080825). According to 2005 UNDP report Sweden had a GDP per capita of 32,525 USD while South Africa had 11,110 USD ([http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR\\_20072008\\_EN\\_Indicator\\_tables.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_20072008_EN_Indicator_tables.pdf), 080826).

can play in making the learning environment conducive for the pupils.’ The South African curriculum offers brief information on the role of the envisaged learner and the envisaged teacher. The other major point that is emphasised in the Swedish curriculum is the working relation and co-operation between the different partners involved in the school activities.

## **Discussion**

The South African compulsory school curriculum is young. It was in use first in 1997 and revised in 2002. The curriculum declared norms and values to be used. It also envisaged what kind of teachers and students are expected in the new South African school.

The curriculum was used as an instrument of a nation building process. It emphasises a democratic South Africa instead of a South Africa that was divided in many unjust systems. Because of this the nation is repeatedly in the centre of a focus at the expense of the individual teacher or learner.

Besides these efforts the nation-building role of the curriculum could have some of its backside. For example based on constitutional rights and recognition by the curriculum emphasis is given to multilingualism<sup>19</sup>. It is an unquestionable right to use one’s original language even in schooling but there is a dilemma that can follow it. Due to their previous official positions English and Afrikaans are spoken by various groups in the country. On the other hand certain ethnic groups speak their own languages, the Xhosas speak Xhosa, the Zulus speak Zulu, and the Sotho speaks Sotho, etc. and attend school for some years in these languages. This definitely can strengthen ethnic identities and at the same time create a double identity of belonging to an ethnic group and to a nation, with its both possibilities and limits. From this point of view one can understand the curriculum’s emphasis on the united South Africa.

In South Africa there are also other agendas influencing the education system but which could not be answered by the education system. One is income inequality and the prevailing poverty among the majority of the population. Because of this income gap the well off are sending their children to private schools with good facilities while the children from the low income families are forced to attend schools with less trained and in some cases less motivated staff and poor facilities. The effort of the state to provide subsidy for less privileged schools might give some results, but the enormous resources some private schools are getting from their affluent community dwarf this government effort. This puts a question mark to the promise or principle of “Ensuring equal access to education”.

There was imbalance of investment on schools during apartheid and different access to resources continued even in the post-apartheid period. As the result of this some schools have plenty while others have minimal resources. There are schools accommodating children in unrepaired buildings, suffering shortage of trained manpower, lack text books, computers, sport fields, etc.

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<sup>19</sup> South Africa has 11 official languages (Afrikaans, English, IsiNdebele, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga) while in Sweden, in addition to Swedish there are five minority languages (Finnish, Tornedalen Finnish, Yiddish, Romany Chib and Samian). Pupils with immigrant background have the right to attend their mother – tongue education at school.

A study by Anthony Lemon (Lemon, 2004) provides a concrete evidence of inequality between provinces, districts, areas and schools. Different groups of parents also have different material and academic resources. Parents with some academic background are usually the ones that are also economically strong. These are parents that usually make the “right” choice for their children. They send their children to schools with well-trained teachers and good facilities and they are also involved in their children’s school administrative boards. According to Lemon the ones with good resources are today from all groups that were formerly classified by race and at present the concept of class will serve better to look at the situation of different groups in the society.

Lemon studied fifteen schools around Grahamstown in Eastern Cape Province. In this town three of the high schools are very high in their academic performance. This reputation has contributed to having students not only from the local middle class families but also from other African countries as well as countries outside the continent.

While these top schools are having good learning facilities such as laboratory, library, computers, etc some township and rural schools are deprived of these resources. He mentions a school with only one computer for administrative purpose and schools without football field. The low resource schools borrow some facilities from the well-established schools under some strict regulations and if they fail to respect them they will be banned from using the facilities (Ibid.).

In Sweden the struggle for a compulsory school in general and nine years compulsory school in particular has a long history. It has gone through different processes before a law was passed in 1950 and some experimental projects had been undertaken before their actual implementation. The first compulsory school curriculum came in 1962 and it is followed by other compulsory school curricula of 1969, 1980 and 1994.

Because of a long time experience with developing democratic curricula and democratic working practice, the role of teachers and students, school staff, school leaders, school as an institution, communities in the vicinity of schools, etc are well defined and established in the Swedish compulsory school curriculum. But improving the quality of the roles, practices, tackling new problems arising and improving curricula are continuous practices.

Lack of good facilities, less integration, segregated living areas can be seen in some Swedish sub-urban areas. In her study on gender and integration Karin Sporre, stresses the problem of “...relationship between men and women, and between the traditional Swedes and the immigrants...” as one challenge to democracy in Sweden (Sporre in Hoppers et al, 2007). But the general situation in the Swedish society and school system is quite unique. There is less unemployment compared to many countries in the world. There are unemployment and other welfare benefits for citizens. According to the Swedish Social Services Act all citizens are entitled to the right to accommodation and minimum income for survival.

Education is like the other welfare sectors in the country, is financed by taxation through municipalities and government budget allocation. A citizen is not paying for schooling in any level (Except for very few families who send their children to the few exclusive schools). In addition to the public schools there are some private schools: religious schools, schools based on some pedagogical lines such as Montessori schools, or schools specialising in some areas

such as IT technology, etc. but none of these schools are charging students. When the parents or the pupil decide that the pupil will attend a public or private school, the budget allocated for the pupil will be channelled to that school.

Schools are getting budget to cover their expenses and to fulfil their basic facilities. As budget is allocated per student, schools with more students receive more money both from municipalities and the state. These schools with more budgets can have more facilities.

As a conclusion I can say, Sweden has through a devoted effort during a long time built a school system with reasonably high standards. However due to different visions and views there are continuous processes of change and development in the education sector. South Africa has given a democratic direction to its education system and has the possibility of improving it further in the near future.

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