

Top of the class

– new teacher education programmes

FACT SHEET

Ministry of Education and Research

U10.009 • March 2010

In its bill ‘Top of the class – new teacher education programmes’, the Government proposes that today’s degree of Bachelor/Master of Education be replaced by four new professional degrees: a degree in pre-school education, a degree in primary school education, a degree in subject education and a degree in vocational education.

The education and skills of teachers are among the most important factors in ensuring a successful school system. Both Swedish and international research show that the skills of teachers play a crucial role for the learning outcomes of pupils. If Sweden is to regain its position as a leading knowledge-based and industrialised country, we must invest in world-class education for pre-school and school teachers.

In ‘Top of the class – new teacher education programmes’ (Govt. Bill 2009/10:89), presented by the Government to the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) on 11 February 2010, the Government proposes that today’s degrees in education be replaced by four new professional degrees: a degree in pre-school education, a degree in primary school education, a degree in subject education and a degree in vocational education. The Government also proposes to cancel the requirement in the Higher Education Act that there be a special body responsible for teacher education and for research associated with such education at higher education institutions that have the right to award degrees in education. The Government also proposes that certain conditions for Swedish Research Council funding of educational science research be changed.

New professional degrees

The four new professional degrees should include knowledge objectives in the subjects to be taught, and objectives concerning other key knowledge and skills of a more general nature for school and pre-school teachers. The new degrees will lead to greater clarity regarding the three components of teacher education: studies in the subjects to be taught, a school placement comprising 30 higher education credits and an educational science core of 60 higher education credits. (Sixty higher education credits are equivalent to one year of full-time studies).

Degree in pre-school education

The Government proposes that the degree in pre-school education comprise 210 higher education credits. The programme should be clearly oriented towards work in pre-school. In the course of the programme, the prospective pre-school teacher will acquire the knowledge and skills required to meet the learning and care needs of the youngest children, and to have a very good knowledge of how reading, writing and basic mathematical skills are acquired.

Degree in primary school education

The degree in primary school education will allow for three specialisations: the first directed at work in pre-school class and years 1–3, the second at work in years 4–6, and the third at work in out-of-school care.

Degree in primary school education directed at work in pre-school class and years 1–3 of compulsory school

The Government proposes that the degree in primary school education directed at work in pre-school class and years 1–3 of compulsory school comprise 240 higher education credits. This programme will give the teacher a broad range of knowledge and equip her or him to follow pupils’ development and teach most subjects, not just a few. Knowledge about the development of reading and writing skills and in-depth knowledge of mathematics for younger children should be an essential part of the skills of these teachers.

Degree in primary school education directed at work in years 4–6 of compulsory school

The Government proposes that the degree in primary school education directed at work in years 4–6 of compulsory school comprise 240 higher education credits. The requirements concerning both a broad orientation and in-depth subject studies are considerably higher, and the student of education will acquire a well-defined identity as a teacher oriented towards years 4–6. Apart from knowledge of Swedish, mathematics and English, the subject studies should allow for some freedom of choice, with students choosing between social subjects, natural science subjects and technology, or one or more practical or artistic subjects.

Degree in primary school education directed at work in out-of-school care

The Government proposes that the degree in primary school education directed at work in out-of-school care comprise 180 higher education credits. The focus of the programme should primarily include knowledge in the field of out-of-school teaching and one or more practical or artistic subjects.

Degree in subject education

There will be two specialisations for students studying for a degree in subject education: one directed at work in years 7–9 of compulsory school (lower secondary school) and the other at work in upper secondary school.

Degree in subject education directed at work in years 7–9 of compulsory school

The Government proposes that the degree in subject education directed at work in years 7–9 of compulsory school comprise 270 higher education credits, 195 of which are to be higher education credits in the subjects themselves (this includes the degree project and parts of the school placement). This specialisation will provide teachers with the skills to teach in three subjects. The programme will provide a limited number of subject combinations so as to suit the needs of the school system and to increase teachers' employability.

Degree in subject education directed at work in upper secondary school

The Government proposes that the degree in subject education directed at work in upper secondary schools comprise 300 or 330 higher education credits, 225 or 255 of which will be in the subjects themselves (this will include the degree project and parts of the school placement), depending on the choice of subjects. This specialisation will provide teachers with the skills to teach in two subjects. The programme will provide a limited number of subject combinations so as to suit the needs of the school system and to increase teachers' employability.

Degree in vocational education

The Government proposes that the degree in vocational education comprise 90 higher education credits. To be accepted for the programme, the Government considers that basic eligibility for higher education studies should be required as well as advanced and relevant vocational knowledge. It should also be possible to provide programmes with great flexibility in terms of time and location, so as to enable women and men with vocational skills to study to become a vocational teacher.

Different paths to degrees in education and pre-school education

It is important that there are a range of paths leading to the teaching profession – for example, for people with other professional experience or for people who were unsure about their choice of profession from the beginning. For those who have sufficient knowledge of at least one subject, there should be a supplementary teacher education programme leading to a degree in subject education. The Government proposes that this supplementary teacher education programme comprise 90 higher education credits.

Since 2007, a special supplementary educational programme has been offered at higher education institutions to people with foreign teaching qualifications to enable them to qualify for employment in the Swedish school system. The Government intends to continue with this educational programme.

At present, there are many teachers lacking education in the field of teaching they are mainly engaged in. The Government has therefore initiated a further educational programme for unqualified teachers, with a total budget of SEK 84 million for the period 2010–2012. The basic point of this initiative is for higher education institutions to validate previous professional experience as teachers and to offer individualised educational programmes that enable participants to meet the requirements for a degree in education or one of the proposed new professional degrees.

Entitlement to award degrees

In terms of volume, teacher education is the largest programme offered by higher education institutions. At present, 24 higher education institutions, spread throughout the country, are entitled to award degrees in education. In the Government's opinion, higher education institutions wishing to organise teacher or pre-school teacher education should have to apply to the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education for entitlement to award the new professional degrees.

Degree in special needs education

Special needs schools and special schools for students with impaired hearing/vision and physical disabilities are in great need of teachers qualified in special needs education. For this reason, the Government proposes that the Postgraduate Diploma in Special Needs Training be extended to include specialisations for deafness or hearing impairments, vision impairments, serious language impairments and learning disabilities. This would meet the need of special needs schools and schools catering for children with disabilities for special needs teachers with specific knowledge about the groups of pupils for whom these types of school are intended.

Educational science research

The Government's school and education policy aims at strengthening the quality of the Swedish education system. Educational science research is a key element in developing a more scientific approach, both among students of education and those instructing them, and among teachers and other educationalists.

The Government considers that it is highly important that educational science research is guaranteed good opportunities for further development. In matters determined by the Swedish Research Council, the Council's Committee on Educational Sciences should decide on the allocation of funds to research and postgraduate education that is relevant to the development of school and pre-school. In order to give researchers in the field of educational science greater freedom, the Government considers that the co-financing requirement should be abolished.



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Printed by Grafisk Service, February 2010. This fact sheet was produced by the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research. Article no: U10.009