Freedom with responsibility:
The path to equivalence and fairness in upper secondary education?

Författare
Agnes Enehammar

Handledare
Richard Glover

Betygsättande lärare
Marco Bianchi
Abstract

The overall aim of this study is to investigate the attitudes of teachers of English and Modern languages towards assessment and the grading process. The inspiration comes from the notion that grades are not set on an equivalent basis in upper secondary schools. The syllabi for the subjects are formulated in a way that enables interpretation, and they have been constructed this way in order for the goals to be re-written on a local basis to better suit the needs of the specific students. This step in the process, formulating a local work plan from the national syllabus, is however often omitted and many teachers have no local work plan to base their teaching on and instead use the generalized syllabi as a base, which in turn are interpreted subjectively. This leads to the situation where there is a lack of equivalence in both education and assessment. In anticipation of the new Education Act including new syllabi and grading criteria teachers have also been asked their opinions and expectations on these, and if they think things will change. The results and analysis conclude that the only way equivalence in grading can be reached is through extensive cooperation between teachers, which would lead to greater objectivity.

Keywords: Assessment, English, fairness, Modern languages, upper secondary school
# Table of Contents

1. Introduction
   1.1. Formulation of the problem
   1.2. Aim and research questions

2. Methodology
   2.1. Selection
       2.1.1. Method of data acquisition
       2.1.2. Procedure
       2.1.3. Delimitations
       2.1.4. Research ethical reflections
   2.2. Disposition of the study

3. Background
   3.1. A historical perspective on the Swedish school and its guiding documents
       3.1.1. “A new assessment paradigm”
   3.2. Conflicts related to school governance
       3.2.1. Decentralized testing and national tests
   3.3. The English’ and Modern language’s Syllabi
   3.4. Equivalence

4. Results from the teacher interviews
   4.1. The current syllabi for English and Modern languages
   4.2. Assessment and grading criteria
   4.3. The new syllabi and grading criteria
   4.4. Collaboration with colleagues and a local work plan
   4.5. Fairness and equivalence in the system

5. Analysis and discussion of results
   5.1. National Tests
   5.2. Time for Cooperation
   5.3. Suggestions from teachers
5.3.1. Assessment ................................................................. 24
5.3.2. Admission to university .................................................. 24
5.3.3. Central or decentralized control ......................................... 24

6. Concluding remarks .................................................................. 26

7. Bibliography .............................................................................. 27
   7.1. Literature ........................................................................... 27
   7.2. Internet ............................................................................... 27

8. Appendix ..................................................................................... 29
   Appendix 1 ............................................................................... 29
      Intervjuguide ....................................................................... 29
   Appendix 2 ............................................................................... 30
      Kursplan - English A (Lpf 94) ............................................... 30
   Appendix 3 ............................................................................... 32
      Kursplan - Modern languages Stage 3 (Lpf 94) ....................... 32
   Appendix 4 ............................................................................... 34
      Ämnesplan - Engelska 5 (Gy 2011) ........................................ 34
   Appendix 5 ............................................................................... 37
      Ämnesplan - Moderna språk 3 (Gy 2011) ............................... 37
1. Introduction

During my last teacher’s training at an upper secondary school in Uppsala, I and a teacher trainee from Germany, who was in Sweden for a month as part of her education, observed a history teacher’s lesson. After the lesson, she and I stayed and talked with the teacher for a while. Since my teacher trainee colleague was not Swedish and she was in Sweden to make a comparative study between the Swedish and German school and education systems upon her return to Germany, the history teacher who we had just observed spoke a bit about how the Swedish system works and what it is like to work as a teacher in a Swedish school. He stated that:

As a teacher in a Swedish school you have a lot of freedom since the Swedish curriculum and the course syllabi are very open to interpretations. We have much more freedom than most other teachers in Europe, in fact, we have freedom with responsibility. Responsibility, since we also have to make sure our students get a good education and that they get the grades that they deserve...

The Swedish Education Act clearly states that “the education shall be of equal standard/equivalent within each type of school, wherever in the country it is provided.” (Chapter 1, §2 and §9), and yet, many reports released by The Swedish National Agency for Education states that this is not reality. In 2009 the report *Likvärdig betygssättning i gymnasieskolan?* (‘Equivalent grades in High School?’) revealed discrepancies between results of national tests and the actual final grades students were given by their teachers. This report further cements the idea that the 16 year old grading system is, in fact, not working satisfactorily.

The 1994 curriculum for the non-compulsory school system in Sweden (Lpf 94) states that “National goals specify the norms for equivalence. However, equivalent education does not mean that the education shall be the same everywhere or that the resources of the school shall be allocated equally”(p.4). That same curriculum, however, does not explain what the term equivalence really means, or how it is to be actualized within the schools, leaving one wondering: How are the schools and the teachers to deal with the issue of equivalence, when the guidelines are so vague?

Since the ultimate power to educate and assess/grade students are laid upon the teacher I wish to examine what guidelines the syllabi and course objectives for English and modern languages, with aims, goals and grading criteria, give teachers to adjust to and/or get help from. I find this topic of great importance from an educational research perspective since, as a new teacher, I will be dependent on the curriculum and syllabi when preparing for my teaching to a much greater extent than more experienced teachers since they have experience and I do not.

I am also interested in looking further into the Swedish school system since we in Sweden have goals and aims in our courses that are much more generalized and vague than in many other countries. This gives Swedish teachers a great deal of freedom to personally decide what methods and materials to use and also what content to teach their students. This freedom ultimately leads to students getting different education and possibly even different grades depending on the
teacher they have, something that would not be possible with much clearer national goals and assessment guidelines.

These issues have not, however, been overlooked by the Swedish Government, which have released a new Education Act along with a new Curriculum and new syllabi for all the subjects, as well as a new grading system that will be in use beginning in 2011. I will therefore also focus a part of my essay on this new Act, specifically on what it is in the syllabi for English and Modern languages that differ from the current ones, and how teachers perceive and evaluate these.

1.1. Formulation of the problem

Because of the freedom of interpretation of the Swedish national curriculum and the syllabi with course objectives students' final grades in a course are likely to be affected by their teacher's personal values, and I will therefore base my essay on the questions: Is it possible to reach equivalence in education given the current state? Will the new Education Act increase the chance for equivalence? How do different teachers approach assessment of students? And what is the relation between syllabi and course objectives and reality?

1.2. Aim and research questions

The purpose of my thesis is to examine the issue of fairness in grading in language teaching in Swedish schools, and ways it could be more equitable since practicing teachers ultimately implement guidelines from the various agencies and since equivalence cannot be achieved without a discussion of fairness and the identification of ways to increase that fairness. I want to find out how influenced language teachers are by the syllabus and course objective, and to what extent course objectives and grading criteria support the assessment of students and grading.

In order to understand why the Swedish curriculum and syllabi look the way they do, I also intend to examine the history of the Swedish school system, and how it has developed.

Furthermore, I wish to look more closely at the term “equivalence,” as this seems to be the major cause of the problem, and thus, the impetus for the current changes in the Swedish school system.

In anticipation of the new curriculum, new syllabi and the new grading system, I intend to examine the opinions of practicing teachers as it pertains to the new documents and system, and if they think these will make it easier for them to assess student performance and give more objective and fair grades.
2. Methodology

2.1. Selection

In order to answer the above questions I chose to interview teachers of English and Modern languages in upper secondary schools in the municipality of Uppsala. I decided to interview language teachers in upper secondary schools since it is of great interest for me as an aspiring teacher of English and Italian. The selection of teachers and schools was made by me having previously communicated with the teachers in question, and after the initial contact the selection was based on the teachers' availability and willingness, and the results are therefore based on interviews with six teachers.

My intention was to conduct interviews according to the principle of maximum variation (Esaiasson et al. 2007: 297) which meant interviewing teachers with different experience, since I wanted to get as many different ways of thinking about the issues as possible. My study is based on interviews with six language teachers, four women and two men. They work in various grades in three different high schools in Uppsala. The average grade points of students vary between all three schools. These teachers' experiences vary from practicing from 30 years to a recent graduate. Four of the six teachers are native Swedish speakers and two are not.

2.1.1. Method of data acquisition

In order to answer the questions my thesis set out to investigate I decided to use a qualitative method as this would allow me to discuss with practicing teachers their perspectives on assessment, the course syllabi and course objectives. I chose interviews as my method since interviews, as opposed to a questionnaire study or observations, provide opportunities for a dialogue between me and the respondents (teachers), where they would have the opportunity to develop their answers in a way that would contribute to a deeper understanding of how they view the subject.

The advantages of using interviews as a method are that it enables the interviewer to improvise and make unplanned follow-up questions and rephrase questions if they are unclear to the respondent and thus avoid misconceptions. The likelihood of misunderstanding the answers will also be reduces since the interviewer can ask the respondent to explain further and develop responses. The disadvantages of this method are it can be difficult to get hold of the interviewees and the number of respondents therefore are few, and the responses of a few people are not representative of the masses and it can therefore be difficult to draw any general conclusions.
Furthermore, interviews are time consuming, and as an interviewer one can unconsciously influence the object and thus affect the answers (Esaiasson et al. 2007: 284).

The questions in the interviews are formulated with the intention of seeking answers to the aims the thesis set out to answer, and has been used as a basis for a discussion that enables the teachers to develop their answers in any direction possible. Asking all teachers the same questions made it easier for me to categorize the questions into different themes and also draw some conclusions on either consensus or disagreement among the teachers.

The questions used in the interviews are as follows:

1. What subjects do you teach?
2. For how long have you worked as a teacher and could you describe your career in the teaching profession?
3. What do you think of the current syllabus in modern languages / English?
4. What guidelines do the syllabi give regarding assessment and grading?
5. Have you teachers together developed a local work plan that you follow?
6. Do you collaborate with colleagues regarding assessment and grading?
7. How do you choose what material to work with and what to teach your students?
8. What do you consider the advantages and disadvantages to be with a syllabus that can be interpreted relatively freely?
9. Do you think the system of assessment and grading is fair?
10. If not – do you have any suggestions on how it could be more fair?
11. What do you think about the new syllabi and grading criteria?
12. Do you think education will change by the new education Act?
13. Do you think the current and/or the new syllabi enable the objective of education being equivalent?

2.1.2. Procedure

I contacted a number of teachers by e-mail, introduced myself, explained what I was writing my thesis on and asked if they felt would be interested in taking part in my study. When the response was positive I also sent them an additional e-mail with the interview questions which would enable them to prepare for the interviews, did they wish to. I then met with the teachers individually for interviews that took all from 30 minutes up to 1 hour and a half. The interviews were thereafter transcribed in order to be analyzed. The results section of the thesis presents and compares the results while they are discussed and set in relation to current debates in the discussion section in order to be put in a larger context.
2.1.3. Delimitations

The maximum variation of the method is limited in the sense that all the teachers are language teachers, they all work in Uppsala city and they all work in upper secondary schools, and I must therefore be careful to draw any general conclusions. Furthermore, the focus of the study is on teachers perceptions on assessment solemnly and other perspectives such as the students’ or school management’s are not included. Additional limitations are the number of teachers interviewed and the number of schools, which is due to the limitation of time. For delimitation of questions please see aim and research questions in section 1.2.

2.1.4. Research ethical reflections

The interviews have been conducted in accordance with the principle of informed consent (Esaiasson et al. 2007: 290) which means that the respondents have been informed about the purpose and content of the study and their participation has been completely voluntary. They have had every opportunity to interrupt the interview or participation at any time and the results from the interviews are completely anonymous since neither the responding teachers nor the schools they work in are mentioned by name.

2.2. Disposition of the study

The study begins with an introduction followed by a formulation of the problem and aims and research questions to investigate. Chapter 2 describes the methodology of the study, with its selection and data acquisition method, procedure, delimitations and research ethical reflections. Chapter 3 focuses on the history of the Swedish school system and curricula, and functions as a base to build the rest of the study on, and as a means to understand why today’s system looks the way it does. The chapter also presents issues related to control over schools, and the timely topics about teacher responsibility, grading as a tool of selection and equivalence in grading. Chapter 4 is descriptive and presents the results from the interviews, which are further discussed in chapter 5. The study is concluded with a closing reflection in chapter 6. The appendix consists of the interview guide with the questions used in the interviews, as well as the current and anticipatory syllabi for English and Modern languages, which by reading them will help the reader by getting a better understanding of the teachers’ responses and reflections.
3. Background

The background section begins with a historical description of how the Swedish school system has developed through time and how the view on teaching and hence the curriculum and syllabi have changed as a result. Given that the starting point of my thesis and survey and its questions are linked to the issues related to the governance over school and equivalent and fair assessment and grading, the background also includes a description of these.

3.1. A historical perspective on the Swedish school and its guiding documents

As is the case in all countries, social, political and religious values and beliefs have influenced and shaped social institutions. The school, as a social institution, is no exception. Traditionally, in Sweden, the church and state have been tightly connected, thus the religious influence was clearly evident throughout most of the history of school in Sweden.

Per Johan Ödman (1995) describes how the school as an institution was founded in the 1200’s and priests were in control of the curriculum, since most teachers were priests or future priests and school thus was dominated by the church and Christian beliefs and seen as an institution with a purpose of furthering those beliefs. In response to social and political changes, the so-called “poor man’s schools” were founded in the late 1700’s, with the aim of reducing vagrancy and preparing youth for honest work and self-sufficiency. In 1842 compulsory school attendance for all was introduced, which led to the establishment of a parallel school system, with children and young people from the privileged classes of society attending grammar schools that would prepare for further study, and working children from non-privileged social classes going to elementary school that would prepare them for work. With social and political shifts, this social division led to public demands for a common public school, as it was believed that a common school for all would equalize social differences, which in turn lead to the foundation of the current elementary school system in the 1950’s. During this time one of the main purposes of school was to ensure equality and to erase rather than maintain social differences.

In the book *Utbildningsreformer och Politisk styrning* (‘Educational Reform and Political Governance’) authors Bo Lindensjö and Ulf P. Lundgren describe how the Swedish parliament in 1960 approved a municipal reform, which in turn led to the decentralization of school governance as part of a larger context in which decentralization was seen as a positive move because it allowed for policies and the shaping of those policies to be conceptualized locally. Along with this idea of decentralization came the idea and emphasis on individualized instruction as a result of shifts in educational research, specifically in the areas of pedagogy and learning theories. Along with this emphasis on individualized instruction came a shift from norm-
referenced assessment, with its emphasis on comparisons of individual students to other students, to criterion-referenced assessment with its emphasis on comparing student performance against a previously stated criterion or goal. This shift in assessment is quite logical since norm-referenced systems sort students, a concept contrary to the notion that schools should be equalizers and that control should be decentralized (2006: 66-77).

This norm-referenced system was questioned during the 1970s and the discussion of changing it into criterion-referenced measurement or goal-based system began (Wedman in Wikström 2005: 24), specifically to create equality and give students an equal education.

In the 1980s a new curriculum (Lgr80) was introduced, which differed significantly from the previous since it had a clearly stated policy on the school's goals, but it allowed local adaptation in terms of how these goals would be reached, and each school was to develop a local plan which was to be subsequently monitored and evaluated on a national level (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006: 83).

In 1994 the most significant changes in school history took place when the curricula and syllabi completely switched from a norm-referenced system to a criterion-referenced measurement/goal-based system (p. 116).

3.1.1. “A new assessment paradigm”

The practical changes that took place in society were largely influenced by a change in the view on pedagogy. Helena Korp (2003: 11-12) states that a new assessment paradigm took place due to the development of sciences and information technologies which in turn led to larger demands on learning. Knowledge was hereby also to be assessed, which meant that grading went from only being a means of sorting into higher education to being a support for learning and hence also an instrument for learning. These changes were motivated by a political perspective of equality, and a belief of a high knowledge being reachable by everyone, not just the elite, where intelligence is not something that is genetic, but something that can be developed either naturally or through education. Korp further states that the transformation of the system also meant a shift in the way of looking at learning, where cognitive psychological and socio-cultural theories outrivaled behaviorist ones as a base for learning, and the focus of assessment was as much on the learning processes in itself as on the result of the learning/teaching process. The assessment should not only be a way of measuring, but should also stimulate learning, which in return also leads to higher demands on students being responsible for their own learning. Additionally, she states that it according the socio-cultural theories is important that students not only understand the task in itself but also the context and that students should be learning things that are important in life. It is therefore up to the teacher to supply students with tasks they feel are meaningful for them, in order for students to feel that what they are learning is relevant. This would also enhance students’ understanding and learning.
According to Anders Jönsson (2009: 19, 22) intelligence from a socio-cultural perspective is viewed not as a genetic, or a context free trait, but rather as the ability to use already existing “tools” and learn how to become more intelligent by using strategies for how to think, reason and solve problems. Jönsson refers to this as metacognition (knowing about knowing), and says it is developed in environments where it is being used, for example in schools. The perspective changed from “what should students know” to “what should students be able to do with their knowledge” (Jönsson 2009: 25), where the focus is on actions and the context of the subjects is a mean to use in order to reach other goals, rather than the goal in itself.

Christian Lundahl (2006: 6-7) states that a curriculum is not only a paper document, but that behind it lies a philosophy as well as conceptions about life. Therefore, the historical development of society affects the way the aim, content and function of the curricula look. Research up until the 1960s was based on philosophical and psychological theories, but that focus shifted to sociological theories during the 1970s and 1980s, and the new visions on learning lead to a new goal-oriented grading system that would better suit the goal-steering of the school as an institution. The new grading system was meant to work as information to the students and their parents as to the extent to which the goals were being reached and if extra help was needed. These “goals to be reached” meant a decentralization of the control, since the goals were written in such a way that teachers could, on a local level and together with colleagues, interpret the goals and make them clearer in order to be used as a guiding document. This was seen as an important step in the development of the teachers’ profession (2006: 382). Lundahl further explains that the new grades were from the beginning not meant to play an important part in the admittance to university, since the design of the different subject courses made it easier to get better grades in some courses than in others, and therefore other tools of measurement were needed, such as the Swedish SAT, which has led to the question of equivalence and fair grades become important and timely in a way that could not have been foreseen when the new system was taken into use (p. 385). Lundahl says that the education act states that the education should be equivalent, but does not state that the grading should be. He advocates that equivalence in a goal-oriented school system only can be reached by clearer goals and criteria with examples on how these goals can be reached and that the clearer these are, the less room for (subjective) interpretation, and goes on to say that it could be suggested that teachers should be setting grades according to an external scale/criterion, but that this would contradict the original thought behind the reform with the goal-oriented system: that the responsibility would make the teachers develop their competencies (p. 388).
3.2. Conflicts related to school governance

The school is always affected by changes in society at large, changes which have led to new approaches to didactics. The current school system is the result of decentralization of school governance, the transition from a norm-referenced system to a goal-based one and a view that assessment should be used as information rather than as an absolute measurement of student knowledge. This view created a new problem as different local interpretations of the guiding documents created greater disparities between different municipalities and schools.

The process for change begins at the national level with formulation of guiding documents in the form of a school law, regulations and curricula, which the municipality in turn reformulates to a local, municipal school plan. This plan is then to be handed to the schools that in turn interpret them and set local targets and action plans. The school has clear goals to reach, but may create the path for reaching these goals themselves. This decentralization and choice means greater variation between schools and that variation is increasing. With the increasing number of evaluations and an emphasis on an absolute grading system the school system and the differences have become more visible. (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006: 117-118).

This is where the disparity between the formulation stage where educational policy is made and goals are formulated and the realization stage where policy decisions must be implemented and enforced is formed, since there are too many players in the game and compromises between central school management, unions, municipalities and political parties are based on perceptions which do not fully reflect the conditions of students, parents, teachers and school leaders in a real school (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2006: 144).

3.2.1. Decentralized testing and national tests

Another component contributing to the differences between schools are the Swedish national tests, which are compulsory only for the core subjects Swedish, Math and English, and developed to help teachers ensure the students are given the grade they deserve. They can therefore be seen as advisory rather than decisive. What makes the tests a part of the problem is that even if set nationally, more often than not they are graded by the student’s own teacher (Erickson 2007), making the assessment subjective.

According to Lundahl (2006: 290), the national tests are developed to improve the standard of education rather than as an assessment tool. The Swedish Board of Education says tests can be used as a tool of measurement, but that it is not compulsory, and according to Lundahl teachers themselves say that they use the tests as a confirmation of their own assessment and grading, rather than as a base for grading.

The philosophy behind the decentralization and locally set goals was that it is the people who work within the school (teachers, school leaders) who have the best knowledge about the local
conditions, and therefore would be the most suitable to formulate the local goals, in order to reach the nationally set ones (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2007: 103-104, Korp 2006: 54-57).

Paradoxically it seems that the very ideas that have been advocated to empower teachers have in reality created a system that does not support equivalence but rather disparities and the development of a society where fairness does not exist.

3.2.2. Teachers’ responsibilities and the importance of grades

“Assessment entails power – over people’s identity, self-worth and future… Fairness and justice are indissimissable obligatory demands on assessments that affect persons’ life-chances…” (Korp 2003: 14)

According to both Black (1998: 24) and Wikström (2005: 40) the main purposes of assessment are to support learning, report the achievements of individuals/giving feedback, satisfy demands for public accountability, as well as being a selection instrument for higher education.

Since the grades in Sweden serve as the main selection instrument for higher education, the consequences of grading are very serious, and there is a problem when assessment is subjective and based on interpretation. This reality has led to the question of equivalence and contributed to the current situation. Wikström (2005: 25) states that Sweden, as opposed to many other countries, leaves the entire assessment and grading responsibility to the teachers, and argues that this means that Swedish teachers are considered proficient enough in assessing and grading and are trusted to give their students the accurate grade.

The school institution is, according to the National Agency of Education, to function as a conveyer of “the cultural heritage and the fundamental values in our society” (Skolverket 2001: 10) and should do this by working towards the nationally formulated steering documents that are set on a governmental level. The head of the school, teachers and other school staff are then to make sure the students reach the nationally set goals. It is up to the teachers to assess the students and use the grading criteria as support. Grades are important to students as they are the selection instrument that decides which university programs the student will be able to apply for. Swedish teachers themselves are fully responsible for grading and evaluating their own students, and no national assessment takes place, which empowers the teachers and gives them a lot of freedom, as well as responsibility. Therefore, the board of education states that “the criteria exist as a support in the assessment process, but require that this process occurs in the interaction/collaboration between different teachers” (Skolverket 2001: 22).
3.3. The English’ and Modern language’s Syllabi

As mentioned in section 1, a new Education Act will be in use beginning in 2011. According to the Ministry of Education the regulatory structure has been revised in order to achieve a structure that is more logical and better reflects how the school system has developed in recent years, and the Education Act has been modernized by being simplified and clarified in order to be better adapted to the goal-oriented education system and to the responsibilities allocated between central and local governments. Furthermore, Minister of Education Jan Björklund says he hopes the reform will enhance the results in the Swedish school (http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/12194/a/142293).

The new act also includes new syllabi for the subjects English and Modern languages, as well as a new grading system. I have looked at the syllabi for the courses English A/5 since this is a core subject in Swedish upper secondary schools and Modern languages stage 3 seeing that stage 3 is the course students take in upper secondary school when continuing to study their language of choice from secondary school.

The grading criteria in the new syllabi differ from the previous ones by being called “demands on knowledge” (kunskapskrav), and the grades Pass, Pass with distinction and Pass with special distinction have been replaced with grades A-F. The goals in the different courses are referred to as “central content” (centralt innehåll), which in turn has been divided into “content of communication” (kommunikationens innehåll), “reception” and “production and interaction”. Furthermore, the new goals have been elaborated and are much more detailed, and give more examples on what it is students should know and be able to do (see Appendix 4 and 5).

The new syllabi for Modern languages has already been determined whereas the English one is still being processed at the moment of writing, and could therefore still be changed before being determined and put into use. The full version of the syllabi for both the current and the anticipatory courses are to be found in the appendix (pages 28-37).

3.4. Equivalence

The issues discussed in section 3 and specifically those identified in the section entitled “Conflicts related to school governance”, directly impact equivalence – the single most important and central concept in recent discussions about schooling in Sweden. Thus the concept of equivalence in itself is highly dependent on the delineation of concepts related to schooling, the resolving of conflicts and a clearly articulated mechanism for ensuring that theoretically conceived concepts and ideas are practically and solidly implemented.

In the report Liktärdig betygställning i gymnasieskolans? (‘Equivalent grades in High School?’) the National Board of Education reaches the conclusion that grades are not set equitably, as it seems that a grade is more dependent on which teacher a student has than on the student’s knowledge.
It furthermore states that there is a structural problem when it comes to the equivalence of upper secondary school grades in Sweden and that this is also a problem of legal security for the students, since they are all competing for the openings in university programs (Skolverket Rapport 338, 2009: 6). Furthermore, the report concludes that previous action plans have not managed to change anything in a satisfactory way. The new steering documents are set out to give clearer goals, as a mean to reach greater equivalence, and new advice to go with these will also be released. The National Agency of Education also puts emphasis on the importance of assessment and grading having a greater part in the new teachers’ education program that will start next year. The report also states that there will be room for interpretations even with the new system and that it therefore is crucial that teachers meet and develop common ground views on assessment and grading in order to ensure equivalence, not only within the school but also in-between different schools.

So what does the term equivalence really mean?

According to Lindensjö & Lundgren (2000: 118, 121) the original aim was to create uniformity and equality through education for all, but with the decentralization of the power over schools and the possibilities to interpret the national guiding documents differently the differences increased between different schools and municipalities, and the new aim thus became to create equality through equal opportunities.

The current discussion about equal opportunity for higher education and work has led to the term equivalence being the aim rather than equality. Material which is being taught in one school can differ from that used in another and still be considered equivalent, of equal value, as long as it stays within the national goals and criteria. The National Agency of Education itself refers to equivalence as a grade in one class being comparable of one in another class, ergo, if two students have the same grade the quality of their knowledge should be the same, even if their knowledge about the subject is not the same: “the knowledge should be equivalent, have the same value from a qualitative perspective, but doesn’t have to be the same in content” (Skolverket 2001: 27) According to the National Agency of education this requires collaboration between teachers, since it is not possible to reach equivalent and fair assessments by just study the texts in the guiding documents, and these are nor written to be used this way, but are written to be used as the base for the dialogue, discussion and cooperation between the teachers on a local as well as on a national level.

In conclusion, the background section provides evidence that the very shifts that precipitated equivalence with emphasis on school as a social institution reinforcing equality, while articulated theoretically, would prove to be more difficult to implement practically.
4. Results from the teacher interviews

After going through and compiling the results from my interviews I found that five main themes arose and I will therefore present my results under the following topics:

- The present syllabi for English and Modern languages
- Assessment and grading
- The new syllabi
- Collaboration with colleagues and a local work plan
- Fairness and equality in the system

Since the aim of the essay was to investigate teachers’ thoughts about assessment, I will demonstrate the results of the interviews primarily by using direct quotations. The quotes from the interviewed teachers have been translated into English in those cases where the interview has not been conducted in English. Furthermore, I will refer to the teachers as Teacher A, Teacher B and so on.

4.1. The current syllabi for English and Modern languages

When asked their opinions on the current syllabi in English and/or Modern Languages, the results were very varied. Five out of the six respondents agreed that the syllabi are unclear and pretty or extremely “fuzzy”; however, they had different opinions related to whether that was a good or bad thing. Teachers B and C said they liked the fact that it is so vague, since it gives teachers a lot of personal freedom. Teacher B stated that the syllabus for English is vague, but that he sees that as good, or even great, since it enables him to be creative:

It’s vague, but that’s good! We have great freedom… It’s not so clear what the School Board wants us to do. They give us freedom, but not so much help. I think it’s great, because I can do what I want with it. You have to be creative! (Teacher B)

Teacher C stated that the syllabi are arbitrary, but “I love the freedom, I get to personalize the courses and orient them towards the level and interest of the pupils… A wonderful position to create something, it’s fantastic!” Teacher C did however point out that such an arbitrary syllabus could cause problems for not so experienced teachers: “…a new teacher could feel lost and bewildered, which is problematic.”
Teacher D said she thinks the guidelines are way too vague, and that she would like to have it a bit more detailed; however, not too detailed since that would inhibit the creativity:

> They are vague, fuzzy, and say nothing of value. I would like to have a middle way, but not too controlled, I find that very negative. It’s important for me that I can be creative. There needs to be a balance. They (the syllabi) are pretty okay, and enable us to choose. Teachers are different and students are different. (Teacher D)

This teacher brought up the example of the British education system, as well as the Cambridge courses, and called them “completely murderous” due to the extremely controlling guidelines and details teachers who work with these have to follow.

Teacher A also stated a syllabus should not be too detailed, and that the earlier syllabi had been way too controlling and not allowing for any kind of freedom at all. This teacher also seemed very unhappy with the current syllabus for English, and said she would have wanted some more guidelines. She stated that by referring to the syllabus for English A “one can basically justify anything”, and that the guidelines are “very arbitrary”. For example she quoted a part of the syllabus where it says the student shall learn about society, culture and traditions in English speaking countries, and stated that by these guidelines she could, if she wanted, “choose to only study ways of living in India” and still justify this by referring to the syllabus for English A since no guidelines as to what is really important to teach the students are given (see Appendix 2 p.28). By having formulated such an arbitrary syllabus which is open for interpretation, she moreover reflected that this would mean the government trusts teachers to be wise enough to understand what the most important material to bring up and teach is but said that “it really isn’t that easy… I often find myself thinking ‘okay… So why are we focusing on this now? Why is this important? And why is this more important to learn than other things?’ She did say a syllabus open for interpretation has some advantages, and that if she would have the opportunity to collaborate more with her colleagues the syllabi would serve as a great base for a discussion, and that it would enable the teachers to use any inspiring ideas they had.

Teacher E stated there were “too many vague guidelines” to follow, which she found confusing and inhibiting for her work. She said she wanted clearer guidelines and “more specific and detailed examples.” She also said the syllabi for English were easier to work from and enabled her to work on the four different skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading) in a well structured way, as opposed to the syllabi for the different stages in Modern Languages, which she described as “fuzzy and difficult to work with”. She complained that all the Modern languages are “lumped together” (as opposed to having one syllabus per language) and that “there are way too many stages which makes the transition from one level to another difficult”.

Only one of the interviewees said the syllabus is clear: Teacher F teaches only Modern Languages and said she finds the goals and grading criteria in the current syllabi “pretty clear”.

14
In the interviews, I also asked some of the teachers how, based on what guidelines the syllabi give them, they decide what material to teach since the guidelines are so open to interpretations. Teacher B stated he had looked at the syllabi in detail “approximately 12 years ago… It is not like I take a look at them every year…” and that he, as opposed to some other teachers, is not working with course books. He instead picks out material he find interesting in order to “try and prepare the students for the national test”. He also said the students like the fact that the teaching is more varied this way (as opposed to when only working with course books), and that they also have some influence over what to learn. Teacher B justifies his decision by stating he “takes the English subject very seriously” and that he feels that “I have a pretty good idea as to what is useful to know” since he travels to both England and the USA often.

Teacher F also said she works a lot towards the national tests, which are non compulsory within Modern Languages, since she finds these being very “sensible” as they “focus on production of language instead of details”.

Teacher C said he has come up with his own strategies for how to work with his students. He suggests that a new teacher with not so much experience who could “feel lost and bewildered” could use the course book as a base for their work since “the books aren’t that bad” and that they do give a good ground for teaching and that there are not too many dangers with working from the course book, except that it could be boring for the students since “students want to try out new things”.

Teacher D uses the course books only sometimes, if there is a special topic she is working with and the course book brings this up in a good way. She prefers to choose with how and what to work together with her students and through a dialogue asking questions such as: “How would you like to work? With which countries?” When they were to work with English speaking countries the students had suggested they work with India, and then she also decided to talk about human rights since that is a hot topic connected with the country. She also said that she likes to work with subjects that are currently important, for example the Nobel Prize when this is going on, or the Olympic Games. By working like this “the language becomes both the goal and the means to reach the goal”. Teacher D chooses the literature to some extent together with her students, and she wants it to be “something that affects them, that is connected to society, that provokes them and emotionally involves them”.

4.2. Assessment and grading criteria

When asked about what help and guidelines the grading criteria give, the majority of teachers said that these too are very open to interpretation and therefore not very helpful when it comes to giving students a grade.

Teacher A said she finds the grading criteria pretty unclear since they give some guidelines, but that it still ultimately is up to the teacher to decide whether a student expresses him- or herself
“clearly”, for example, and that this could represent different things for different teachers: “what does it (clearly) really mean? I might think that a student expresses him/herself clearly, but another teacher might think he/she does not.”

Teacher B declared that “the grading criteria really is a bunch of adverbs”, which in turn are not very easy to interpret since “what is, in actuality, the difference between ‘good’ and ‘very good’?”

“You don’t get any directions!” according to Teacher C who does, however, also state that this for him personally is “not a problem” and that he has come up with personal strategies for assessing his students. Nevertheless, he seems to be aware of what problems this could cause for other, less experienced, teachers, by expressing that he sometimes wonder: “15 years ago, what was I doing?”

Teacher D declares she uses the National tests as these “work as a guarantee for the students getting the right grades”. This correlates with the answer I got from Teacher F, who said she always uses the optional National tests for Spanish and German, which give clear examples of what a student should know in order to get a specific grade. However, she stated that the grading probably is affected by teachers’ subjective opinions, and it therefore probably would be more fair if the assessment was conducted externally. Teacher F also stated that the grading criteria in the syllabus for Modern Languages are “okay”, but questioned the possibility of having clearer criteria without this having an effect on the freedom and creativity in her line of work since “can I really get better grading criteria if I don’t want stricter guidelines as to what to teach?”

4.3. The new syllabi and grading criteria

Three out of the six teachers had looked at the new syllabi very little or not at all and therefore had no specific opinion about them. Two of the teachers stated that they did not think that the teaching of a specific subject would change remarkably after the introduction of the new syllabi.

All teachers said they would devote time, before the new syllabi are to be in use, to sit with their colleagues.

Two of the three teachers who had already looked at the new syllabi stated that these gave no better guidelines than the present ones, and that the only difference and the only change was that the new ones are much more detailed, but still, in essence, say the same thing as the current ones.

Teacher F expressed concerns because the different skills have gotten a more central part in the upcoming syllabus for Modern Languages, and that what students are to produce is more clearly specified in the new syllabi. Communication and interaction are being emphasized more than earlier. She did express concerns about the goals being “a bit diffuse and not clear enough”, and that it for that reason is important to sit down with colleagues and “juggle and interpret the syllabus”.
According to Teacher C “things are going to be no better” when the new syllabi are put into use, and he believes teachers will still have the same problems because while the new syllabi are more detailed and more specific “every single concept is open to interpretation”. Furthermore, he thinks that the new syllabi are “still not clear enough. For example in writing, it is not specified enough what the goals are, and there are not enough examples. And when they provide examples there are too many.” In addition, Teacher C expresses concerns about the new grades and grading criteria, as the new grade E (which is supposed to correspond to G/pass) will be much more difficult to reach than the old grade for pass. He thinks this will lead to a higher percentage of the students failing the course.

Teacher A reflected over the aim of a new syllabus with additional clarification of what it is students should learn, but said she does not think that is the case since:

It's still very unclear as to what you're supposed to bring into your teaching. It covers pretty much all that life contains. So, what should I choose from this? ...fiction ...oh well, right... What type of fiction then? ...this is so incredibly general... There is so much here that is relatively, I mean in one paragraph the word relatively is mentioned three times ...or in the same sentence actually; 'it is relatively diverse, relatively clear, relatively coherent, with some fluency, to some extent'(see Appendix 4 p.33)... It's quite difficult to determine... What it all means. (Teacher A)

4.4. Collaboration with colleagues and a local work plan

On the question of whether they had worked out a local plan to follow at their school, five of the respondents answered no. Teacher A however said she and her colleagues had worked out a plan for the English subject, but not for Modern Languages, and also that she and her colleagues together decide what course books to use (i.e. to buy for the school) and that they also construct exams together that are used in all of their classes.

Teachers B and D work in a school were all the national tests in English are divided among all English teachers. Once graded by one teacher, the exams are also graded by another teacher, which means that all tests are always graded by (at least) two teachers. This had been decided on since grading the national tests can be a “high burden if one teacher is to grade the tests of six classes,” as well as being “much more fair for the students”. The teachers at this school also put together tests for the A and B course in English together with their colleagues. In addition, Teacher D “occasionally works together with colleagues in other subjects, with interdisciplinary projects on different topics such as psychology, racism or human rights for example”.

At the school where Teacher C works the teachers of English collaborate by putting together so called “pop-quizzes” that they use in their classes. He also said that they help each other when they feel uncertain as to what grade a student should be allocated on a National test, and hence ask for a second opinion.
Teacher F declared they do not have a local work plan at her school which recently turned out to be a disadvantage when a substitute was hired to teach Spanish. The substitute had no idea what she was supposed to teach. According to Teacher F this is because all teacher at this school working with Modern languages have been working at other schools prior and consequently already have worked out strategies for how and what to teach. This teacher does however express a desire for “more time to collaborate and juggle ideas with co-workers”.

4.5. Fairness and equivalence in the system

“No, definitely not!”

When asked if they think the grading system is fair, all six of the interviewed teachers said no, because the course objectives and grading criteria are so arbitrary and open to interpretations.

Teacher A even went as far as stating that “it couldn’t possibly be fair, because the guidelines are extremely arbitrary, as you can see in the syllabus. And in the grading criteria too for that matter...” She also brought up an example that shows even further how difficult the issue of assessment and grading can be: “I was at a meeting once where we had gathered Swedish teachers and we had to assess a national test sample... and the result was everything from G to a MVG on the same text.”

Teacher B responded to my question on fairness with the statement “the national test is supposed to ensure a similar assessment for the whole country, something that is not possible to achieve at all when the teacher corrects his/her own students’ tests; it is completely worthless."

Teacher C told me there is not enough time to make sure the assessment and grading is fair or equivalent, and referred to “the stress of May” when he sometimes has to grade 400 students in a matter of weeks. He also stressed the problem with personal relationships between teachers and students, where a teacher is supposed to “help, support and assess their students”, which he believed contributes to the fact that there currently is an “enormous problem” with students being given a grade too high (which is currently another issue being discussed by the Swedish government). According to Teacher C, the issues that we see being currently discussed in the media are just “the tip of an iceberg”.

This issue was also brought up by Teacher E who said she believes that teachers are prone to give their students a higher grade because of personal relationships, in contrast to awarding students they are not very fond of a lesser grade than they actually deserve, “as some of the students claim”. She also said “it would be better if there were more grades, because now it is very difficult to justify a grade you give to a student if they question it”. In her opinion the grade pass is much too wide, and can be given a student who is on the verge to a fail as well as to a student who is on the verge to a pass with distinction, which hence are given the same grades regardless of the knowledge they possess.
Teacher F said, in accordance with Teacher C’s opinion, that “there is not enough time”. She stated that in order for the assessing and grading to be fair, time needs to be set aside for colleagues to discuss the grading criteria, so that everyone can agree on what a grade in a course actually demands.

I also had a follow up question in my interview guide where I asked the teachers if they had any ideas on how to increase the fairness and equivalence in grading, which seemed to be a topic that all of them had given a lot of thought to.

Five out of the six teachers requested external assessment of the National Tests, since, as Teacher A put it, “complete fairness can never be reached as long as it we ourselves that grade the students”, something Teacher C also said and added that he doesn’t understand “why we are the only, or one of the few, European countries without external examinants for the national test?” He reflected that it is probably due to the fact that external examinants would mean a much greater cost for the government. He also stressed the lack of “follow-ups” on schools, where he said the municipality is doing a great job at collecting information about the results on National Tests but “what are the consequences? We are answering to nobody. It is inevitable what is going to happen if you can get away with stuff.” Teacher C believes that in order for there to be a change in the system there is a need for “accountability and consequences! …with this sort of system you’ve got to make people afraid… otherwise the grades will not be fair”. He also said there is a need for more collaboration, with conferences for staff regarding both subjects and grades.

Teacher D also advocated a need for external examinations for the National Tests, and she also said there should be National Tests for all subjects, more grades (which will be reality with the new system), development of the teachers’ education, more collaboration with the students, using other methods than grades as a mean to be accepted to university, further education of already practicing teachers “in a serious way, as opposed to the currently unproductive professional development days”, making sure that the school management knows what they are doing and finally, raising the salaries.

Teacher B stated that no one should be allowed to work as a school politician unless they have real knowledge of what working in a school actually means:

Politicians need to visit schools. They cannot keep such a distance to schools. In my opinion a person should have to work at minimum at 25% at a school in order to be a school politician. If that were the case, they would never dare to make such bad decisions when it comes to school.
(Teacher B)

He moved on to stating “teacher certification this and that, raise the salaries! That’s how we will be better teachers and higher status in the profession. Nothing comes for free that is worth anything.” In addition he expressed concerns regarding the differences increasing steadily much
as a result of kids being able to choose for themselves which school to attend, with the result in turn being that some schools have turned into elitist schools and others into low performing schools. He said that this is the result when the municipality and schools are working “against rather than with each other”, and saw the only solution to the problem as re-centralizing governing over school.
5. **Analysis and discussion of results**

After a review of literature and interview results the main problem seems to be a fundamental discrepancy in the process between the stage where goals are formulated and the step where the goals are implemented. Specifically, the Swedish Government advocates broad national goals that, on the local level, should be developed into a work plan reflective of local contexts and needs. In addition, the Swedish Government gives local areas the option of using the national exams as a basis for overall grading of students. Based on my interviews, some schools do not have local work plans and no common expectations for if or how the national tests should be used.

Even though the National Agency of Education states that the nationally set goals have to be interpreted and rewritten on a local level in order to function, all the teachers except one at the schools I visited said they did not have a local work plan, but instead had to come up with their own, personal strategies for teaching as well as assessing and grading their students. The study indicates that teachers find that the syllabi per se are not very helpful, or even “not helpful at all”, neither when it comes to what content they should teach nor how to grade.

The consequences of the omission of a fundamental step in the process is that there is no chance that equivalency can be obtained nor is there a chance that students will receive a fair grade. When each teacher, because of a lack of a local work plan along with a plan for if and how to use the national tests, is left to individually develop content and grading criteria there can be no chance of inter rater reliability and thus, no chance of consensus or fairness. To increase inter rater reliability the instrument must be validated and the rater trained.

In discussions with the Swedish teachers who have insight into what school systems look like in other countries as well as with teachers who are practicing in other countries it has become clear that teachers in many other countries are much more restricted in their teaching by both the curriculum and syllabi, which often are more detailed in what should be taught and how. With stricter guidelines and thus coherence the equivalence in education in Sweden would probably also be greatly enhanced.

The current system is positive because it enables teachers to be creative and also relies on the professional expertise of them. This freedom and creativity is also positive for students because teachers can implement materials and methods that directly reflect the students’ needs – their interests and learning styles. However, the current system with its breakdown in the process has the unintended consequences of a lack of fairness because teachers are in essence left to develop their own content and grading criteria without any common guidelines and with or without the expectations that the national goals are even examined. Furthermore, in the absence of a locally developed work plan teachers can basically justify anything they teach, which in itself makes
education inherently unequal. Compounding the problem, and substantiated through interviews, teachers at the same school may use different texts or no texts at all.

Either way, what is important in a system that works this way is that there is some way to ensure that the education is equivalent and students in different schools and who have different teachers all get an education that is equal in value and grades that are fair.

The teachers I spoke to did not seem to think things will change with the introduction of the new syllabi and grading system, but they did give many examples of how the system is not working in a satisfactory way and how it could be changed in order to enhance equivalence. Issues identified by the teachers as contributing to the current situation include: The use of the results from national tests and who grades the tests, a lack of time for cooperation between professionals to develop instruments and common criteria to fairly assess student knowledge, and an increase in professional development opportunities in specific content areas and in the area of assessment. In the following chapter I will discuss the factors contributing to the current situation as well as suggestions by the teachers for improving education in Sweden.

5.1. National Tests

Ultimately, there should be consensus as to if and how the national tests are used. The majority of the teachers I spoke to expressed a desire for external examiners for the National tests. Since the tests currently are graded by the students’ teachers, it seems nearby paradoxical the grading could be either objective or fair, since the teachers discussed the difficulty of grading students they had developed relationships with objectively. In some schools teachers have come up with other systems for grading, such as dividing all National tests in English between all English teachers and even having two teachers read a test before it being graded for example. However, in order to ensure complete objectivity the examiner would have to be a person that has no personal relationship with the students and would therefore have to be an external person. This is the case in many other countries (England, Wales, the United States, Japan) and it would probably work out well in Sweden too, but it would cost a lot more than having the teachers themselves doing it.

Another perspective on how the National test could work beneficial for the equivalence could be by increasing the importance of it, since the national test currently is used more as a device for teachers to make sure the grade they want to give the student is correct, rather than having a lot of influence on the final grade.

Some of the teachers also said they would like to have national tests in all subjects, as opposed to only in the core subjects as is the case now. There are National tests in for example German and Spanish that teachers can use if they want to, and the teacher I spoke to who taught these subjects said she always uses them and thinks they are excellent and that she uses them both in
order to check that her grading is “correct” and also as a base for her teaching where she “teaches in order to prepare for the national test”.

5.2. Time for Cooperation

The teachers I interviewed claimed they do not have enough time, enough time to collaborate with colleagues in general or enough time to make sure all students get the correct final grade. In the old grading system a teacher was responsible for giving out a percentage of different grades to the students in one class and one subject on a normative bases, whereas a teacher today have to make sure a student is granted the correct grade accordingly his or her performance and knowledge of a subject. This takes time, time the teachers claim they do not have. So how to make sure all students get the correct grade if there is not enough time to do this?

Time seems to be the issue when it comes to working out a local work plan as well, and three of the teachers said they would like to have more time for discussing things like this at their discipline specific meetings.

Even though the curriculum and course syllabi are not written to be used as documents that directly control the teaching, this is how it is in many schools in Sweden. Only one of the teachers I spoke to said she and her colleagues had worked out a local work plan together to follow, but this was only for English, and in Modern languages she was, just like the other teachers, supposed to figure out what content to teach and how to teach it by herself and by interpreting the nationally set syllabi for Modern languages. The collaboration teachers seem to have with colleagues considered other things, such as putting together pop-up quizzes, deciding which course books to acquire or give a second opinion as what grade a student should have on the National test. This lack of cooperation could be stated to be one of the major contributors to the problem of equivalence, since it enables, or even obliges, the interpretation of the syllabi to be subjective, and hence the teaching and grading to be subjective too.

Teachers also complained about the grading criteria being “too vague”, which is also a consequence of the lack of cooperation between teachers since the teachers then have to use the nationally set grading criteria and interpret these by themselves in order to grade students, which, as I have stated before, was not the original idea. The grading criteria, in line with the goals in the syllabi, were written to be used as a base for a discussion where teachers together would sit down and interpret the nationally set criteria and then reformulate these so that they could be implemented on a local level. Since this stage in the process often is skipped the critique of the grading criteria being too vague cannot be said to be exaggerated since the grading criteria the way they are supposed to be used in order to support the teachers have not yet been formulated.
5.3. Suggestions from teachers

Suggestions from the teachers for how to deal with the current situation and its challenges moving forward include: The inclusion of areas of assessment, such as the development of instruments, grading criteria and how to deal with subjectivity in teacher training programs, the development of alternative ways to evaluate candidates for admission into the university, and a more centralized control over both content and assessment of students.

5.3.1. Assessment

Specifically related to assessment, many teacher trainees receive little or no training in the area of assessment. For example, in my own training, I received one seminar on the topic of inter rater reliability and this seminar was taught out of the English department, not the Department of Education. In this seminar, students in groups of three graded four essays and had to rank the essays. The exercise made me realize the importance of grading strategies and how difficult the whole area of assessment is, if one, as a teacher, is truly committed to fairness and equivalence. This exercise also helped me understand the fundamental challenges facing teachers in schools today given little or no guidance of what to teach or how to assess student knowledge.

Teachers suggested the teachers training program should be developed and give students more education regarding assessment and grading.

5.3.2. Admission to university

Currently, admission to Swedish universities is based mostly on grades. One of the interviewees suggested that given the current situation, we begin to look at and to develop alternatives for admission such as interviews, inter and intra personal skills and “fit” for a job. That minimizes the problem that an inherently flawed issue (grades) is used as a basis for admission. One area where grades are partly combined with alternative selection is in the admission to medical school where the selection also is based on tests and interviews that show the applicant's motivation and suitability for medical school and working as a doctor. (http://läkarstudent.se/antagning.html) By using alternative methods for selection to higher education the issue of grades having become also a legal problem would hence be reduced.

5.3.3. Central or decentralized control

One of the interviewed teachers stated that he wished we returned to a more centralized form of driving education so that we could minimize the differences between schools within a
municipality as well as the differences within the nation. In addition, he stated that the current privatization of schools would be minimized by a return to a more centralized control of school as equality cannot be attained when education and schools are driven by economic motives.
6. Concluding remarks

Practicing teachers seem to think the new curricula and new syllabi will not change their way of working in a notable way. However only an in-depth follow-up study in the years following the implementation will show what the results have been regarding the achievement of greater equivalence.

The most notable aspect of this research is the realization that a vital step in this process has not been systematically implemented – the locally developed work plan. The Swedish school system is based on the principle of nationally set goals which are to be interpreted and developed at a local level in order to get concrete ways of learning to reach the nationally set goals. In a system like this, the absence of the systematic implementation of that step will result in little or no change. No matter how well formulated and timely the new national plan, the outcomes will not be realized without a process that ensures locally stated goals and a commitment to structuring the workplace so that teachers have both the time and skills necessary to ensure fairness and equivalence. In addition, there is a need for an instrument to ensure that education as well as the grading is equivalent throughout the country and a way to evaluate the extent to which the national goals are reached. An instrument that both the Swedish National Agency for Education and teachers seem to agree on to be beneficial for this purpose would be national tests, perhaps even in all subjects. In order to truly ensure the equivalence, a wish for nationally developed assessments as opposed to locally developed assessments has been articulated by a few of the teachers. One of the problems with this is cost, but as one of the teachers said in my interview with him: “nothing comes for free that is worth anything” (Teacher B).

So it seems clear that a commitment to the original intent of the process, namely the implementation of the step that ensures a locally developed work plan, along with locally stated goals and criteria and a philosophical and financial commitment to the development of national tests and outside evaluators will prove to be important steps in ensuring the ultimate success of the new educational reform.
7. Bibliography

7.1. Literature


7.2. Internet

Antagning till läkarprogram. Available at: http://läkarstudent.se/antagning.html (2010-12-15)

Curriculum for the Non-Compulsory School System - Lpf 94. Available at:
http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=1070 (2010-10-17)

Den nya skollagen - för kunskap, valfrihet och trygghet. Available at:
http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/12194/a/142293 (2010-12-20)

Erickson, G. (May 2007). National assessment of foreign languages in Sweden. Available at:

Likvärdig betygssättning i gymnasieskolan? En analys av sambandet mellan nationella prov och kursbetyg. Available at: http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=2286 (2010-10-17)

Skollagen (2010:800) (Chapter 1, §9) Available at:

Translation of the Education Act (1985:1100) (Chapter 1, §2 and §9) Available at:
http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/21538 (2010-11-30)

Syllabi

English. Available at:
http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/2503/a/13845/func/amnesplan/id/EN/titleId/Engelska (2010-10-17)

Modern Languages. Available at:
http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/2503/a/13845/func/amnesplan/id/MSPR/titleId/Moderna%20spr%E5k (2010-10-17)

The new syllabus for English. Available at: http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/3089 (2010-12-29)

The new syllabus for Modern Languages.
Available at: http://www.skolverket.se/skolfs?id=1810 (2010-12-29)
8. Appendix

Appendix 1

Intervjuguide

Tema 1: Läraryrket
   1) Vilka ämnen undervisar du i?
   2) Hur länge har du jobbat som lärare och skulle du kunna beskriva din beskriva din karriär inom läraryrket?

Tema 2: Kursplanen och bedömning
   3) Vad tycker du om den nuvarande kursplanen i moderna språk/engelska?
   4) Vilka riktlinjer ger den dig gällande bedömning?
   5) Har ni utarbetat någon lokal arbetsplan som du följer?
   6) Samarbetar du med kollegor gällande bedömning?
   7) Hur väljer du vilket material du arbetar med och vad du lär eleverna?
   8) Vilka för- respektive nackdelar anser du att en kursplan som går att tolka relativt fritt har?

Tema 3: Rättvisa
   9) Tycker du att bedömningssystemet är rättvist?
   10) Har du något förslag på hur det skulle kunna bli mer rättvist?

Tema 3: Framtiden
   11) Vad anser du om den nya ämnesplanen (kursmål/bedömningskriterier)?
   12) Tror du att undervisningen kommer att förändras i och med den nya ämnesplanen?

Tema 4: Likvärdighet
   13) Anser du att de nuvarande och/eller framtida kursplanerna gör det möjligt att ha en utbildning/betygssättning som är likvärdig?
Appendix 2

Kursplan - English A (Lpf 94)

Goals

Goals that pupils should have attained on completion of the course

Pupils should:
understand clearly enunciated speech from different regions, on subjects which are not entirely unfamiliar
desire, have the confidence and be able without preparation to take part in discussions on familiar subjects and exchange information, personal views and experiences
be able with preparation to verbally provide information about or describe a subject or area of interest, and show evidence of adapting their language to the requirements of the situation
be able to read and understand texts with varying factual contents, especially texts linked to their study orientation or their own areas of interest
be able to read and understand simple literature and through literature acquire a knowledge of cultural traditions in English-speaking countries
be able to formulate themselves in writing in order to inform, instruct, argue and express feelings and values, as well as have the ability to work through and improve their own written production
have a knowledge of social conditions, cultural traditions and ways of living in English-speaking areas, and be able to use this knowledge to compare cultures
be able to consciously use and evaluate different approaches to learning in order to promote learning
be able to independently retrieve information from different sources, as well as process and structure the information obtained.

Grading criteria

Criteria for Pass

Pupils also understand the contents of regional English where the language is spoken at a relaxed tempo in everyday situations.
Pupils exchange information and views in discussions and can successfully use different strategies to solve language problems.
Pupils express themselves orally with clear and distinct pronunciation, and are able to adapt to some extent their spoken language to both informal and somewhat more formal contexts.

Pupils understand the main contents of clear non-fiction texts, specialist texts and literature, as well as assimilate details through more thorough reading.

Pupils write in clear language, not only personal messages, stories and reflections, but also summaries dealing with their own interests and study orientation.

Pupils describe the position enjoyed by the English language in the world, as well as, on the basis of a knowledge of societal conditions and customs in areas where English is spoken, make comparisons with their own cultural experiences.

Pupils take responsibility for planning, carrying out and evaluating their work, as well as using appropriate aids.

Criteria for Pass with distinction

Pupils understand the main features and most of the details of clearly spoken regional speech.

Pupils introduce and maintain a dialogue, obtain and provide information, as well as express their own views in a clear and easy to understand manner.

Pupils relate, describe and explain with context in their own areas of interest and competence, as well as retell and verbally summarise material that is well-known to them.

Pupils understand not only the main contents, but also most of the details in clear non-fiction texts and literature, as well as more difficult texts through more thorough reading.

Pupils write letters, notes and summaries of material they have obtained in a clear and informative way that is appropriate for different purposes and audiences.

Criteria for Pass with special distinction

Pupils understand and comment on both the whole and the details of clearly enunciated spoken language with variations in tempo, as well as understand the subtleties of the language.

Pupils are able to converse freely and with good fluency in different situations, express themselves in a variety of speech forms and adapt their language to the subject, situation and listener.

Pupils draw conclusions from their reading on the purpose of a text, understand the views and values expressed therein, both in terms of details and overall contents.

Pupils write with coherence and variation, use words and structures with confidence, as well as communicate in writing in ways appropriate to different audiences.

Retrieved from: http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/2503/a/13845/func/anneplan/id/EN/titleId/Engelska
Kursplan - Modern languages Stage 3 (Lpf 94)

Goals

Goals that pupils should have attained on completion of the course

Pupils should:
understand clear speech in simple instructions, narratives and descriptions, which relate to their own areas of interest or areas familiar to them
be able to take part in discussions on everyday subjects, as well as contribute to keeping a conversation going
be able to orally relate something with which they are familiar
be able to read and with good understanding assimilate the content of simple instructions, narratives and descriptions, as well as be able to extract facts from non-fiction texts, which are simple in terms of language and contents
be able to express themselves in simple forms in writing in order to relate, describe or provide some information
have some familiarity with everyday life, ways of living and traditions in some countries where the language is used, and be able to make observations of some clear similarities and differences in relation to their own cultural experiences
be able to reflect over how their own learning progresses
be able to use a range of simple aids in order to understand and express themselves
be able in a simple form to plan, carry out and evaluate work tasks individually, or in cooperation with others.

Grading criteria

Criteria for Pass

Pupils understand the main contents of clear speech in situations, with which they are familiar and where the language is simple.

Pupils make themselves understood in everyday conversation and contribute to communication, but are dependent on easily identifiable situations where relatively uncomplicated language is used.
Pupils speak simply, understandably and with coherence.

Pupils are able to adapt to some degree their reading to different purposes, providing the text contains simple and clear language and where the style is easy to recognise.

Pupils write simply and understandably, as well as put and answer simple questions in interactive writing of different kinds.

Pupils make simple observations about clear phenomena in areas where the language is spoken, and acquire simple and concrete information about these language areas.

Pupils take responsibility for parts of their work with the language, and are able to use different ways to learn, but need support and guidance.

Pupils use aids in order to understand, express themselves and learn.

Criteria for Pass with distinction

Pupils understand the main elements and clear details of simple, spoken language and use the information received.

Pupils use different strategies to make communication in everyday subjects function.

Pupils speak clearly, with good pronunciation and with context.

Pupils understand the overall contents of a text and use the information received by e.g. summarising its contents.

Pupils write clearly and understandably and communicate in writing i.a. by putting and answering questions.

Criteria for Pass with special distinction

Pupils understand the main contents and details of clearly enunciated language, and can in different ways use the information received.

Pupils work together in different types of everyday discussions, and solve language problems in an effective way.

Pupils express themselves orally with coherence and fluency.

Pupils understand the overall contents and details when reading and comment in different ways on the contents of a text.

Pupils write clearly and with context, as well as communicate in writing in different ways.

Retrieved from:
http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/2503/a/13845/junc/anneplan/id/MSPR/titleId/Moderna%20spr%E5k
Appendix 4

Ämnesplan - Engelska 5 (Gy 2011)

Centralt innehåll

Undervisningen i kursen ska behandla följande centrala innehåll:

Kommunikationens innehåll

- Ämnesområden med anknytning till elevernas utbildning samt samhälls- och arbetsliv; aktuella områden; händelser och händelseförlopp; tankar, åsikter, idéer, erfarenheter och känslor; relationer och etiska frågor.
- Innehåll och form i olika typer av fiktion.
- Levnadsvillkor, attityder, värderingar och traditioner samt sociala, politiska och kulturella förhållanden i olika sammanhang och delar av världen där engelska används. Engelska språkets utbredning och ställning i världen.

Reception

- Talat språk, även med viss social och dialektal färgning, och texter som är instruerande, berättande, sammanfattande, förklarande, diskuterande, rapporterande och argumenterande, även via film och andra medier.
- Sammanhangande talat språk och samtal av olika slag, till exempel intervjuer.
- Skönlitteratur och annan fiktion.
- Sakprosa av olika slag och med olika syften, till exempel manualer, populärvetenskapliga texter och reportage.
- Strategier för att lyssna och läsa på olika sätt och med olika syften.
- Olika sätt att söka, välja och kritiskt granska texter och talat språk.
- Hur ord och fraser i muntliga och skriftliga framställningar skapar struktur och sammanhang genom att tydliggöra inledning, orsakssammanhang, tidsaspekt och slutsats.

Produktion och interaktion

- Muntlig och skriftlig produktion och interaktion av olika slag, även i mer formella sammanhang, där eleverna instruerar, berättar, sammanfattar, förklarar, kommenterar, värderar, motiverar sina åsikter, diskuterar och argumenterar.
- Strategier för att bidra till och aktivt medverka i diskussioner med anknytning till samhälls- och arbetslivet.
- Bearbetning av egna och andras muntliga och skriftliga framställningar för att variera, tydliggöra och precisera samt för att skapa struktur och anpassa till syftet och situationen.
I detta ingår användning av ord och fraser som tydliggör orsakssammanhang och tidsaspekter.

**Kunskapskrav**

**Betyget E**

Eleven förstår **huvudsakligt innehåll och uppfattar tydliga detaljer** i talad engelska i varierande tempo och i tydligt formulerad skriven engelska, i olika genrer. Eleven visar sin förståelse genom att **översiktligt** redogöra för, diskutera och kommentera innehåll och detaljer samt genom att med **godtagbart** resultat agera utifrån budskap och instruktioner i innehållet.

Eleven väljer och använder **med viss säkerhet** strategier för att tillgodogöra sig och kritiskt granska innehållet i talad och skriven engelska.

Eleven väljer texter och talat språk från olika medier och använder på ett relevant sätt det valda materialet i sin egen produktion och interaktion.

I muntliga och skriftliga framställningar i olika genrer formulerar sig eleven **relativt** varierat, **relativt** tydligt och **relativt** sammanhängande. Eleven formulerar sig även med **visst** flyt och i **någon mån anpassat** till syfte, mottagare och situation. Eleven bearbetar, och gör **enkla** förbättringar av, egna framställningar.

I muntlig och skriftlig interaktion i olika, även mer formella, sammanhang uttrycker sig eleven **relativt** tydligt och med **visst** flyt samt med **visst** anpassning till syfte, mottagare och situation. Dessutom väljer och använder eleven **i huvudsak** fungerande strategier som **i viss mån** löser problem i och förbättrar interaktionen.

Eleven diskuterar **översiktligt** några företeelser i olika sammanhang och delar av världen där engelska används, och gör då också **enkla** jämförelser med egna erfarenheter och kunskaper.

**Betyget D**

Betyget D innebär att kunskapskraven för E och till övervägande del för C är uppfyllda.

**Betyget C**

Eleven förstår **huvudsakligt innehåll och uppfattar väsentliga detaljer** i talad engelska i varierande tempo och i tydligt formulerad skriven engelska, i olika genrer. Eleven visar sin förståelse genom att **vägrundat** redogöra för, diskutera och kommentera innehåll och detaljer samt genom att med **tillfredsställande** resultat agera utifrån budskap och instruktioner i innehållet.

Eleven väljer och använder **med viss säkerhet** strategier för att tillgodogöra sig och kritiskt granska innehållet i talad och skriven engelska.

Eleven väljer texter och talat språk från olika medier och använder på ett relevant och **effektivt** sätt det valda materialet i sin egen produktion och interaktion.

I muntliga och skriftliga framställningar i olika genrer formulerar sig eleven **relativt** varierat, **tydligt**, **sammanhängande och relativt strukturerat**. Eleven formulerar sig även med **flyt och viss**...
**anpassning** till syfte, mottagare och situation. Eleven bearbetar, och gör **välgrundade** förbättringar av, egna framställningar.

I muntlig och skriftlig interaktion i olika, även mer formella, sammanhang uttrycker sig eleven tydligt och med flyt samt med **viss** anpassning till syfte, mottagare och situation. Dessutom väljer och använder eleven fungerande strategier som löser problem i och förbättrar interaktionen.

Eleven diskuterar **utförligt** några företeelser i olika sammanhang och delar av världen där engelska används, och gör då också **välutvecklade** jämförelser med egna erfarenheter och kunskaper.

**Betyget B**

Betyget B innebär att kunskapskraven för C och till övervägande del för A är uppfyllda.

**Betyget A**

Eleven förstår **såväl helhet som detaljer** i talad engelska i varierande tempo och i tydligt formulerad skriven engelska, i olika genrer. Eleven visar sin förståelse genom att **välgrundat och nyanserat** redogöra för, diskutera och kommentera innehåll och detaljer samt genom att med **gott** resultat agera utifrån budskap och instruktioner i innehållet.

Eleven väljer och använder **med säkerhet** strategier för att tillgodogöra sig och kritiskt granska innehållet i talad och skriven engelska.

Eleven väljer texter och talat språk från olika medier och använder på ett relevant, **effektivt och kritiskt** sätt det valda materialet i sin egen produktion och interaktion.

I muntliga och skriftliga framställningar i olika genrer formulerar sig eleven varierat, tydligt, sammanhängande **och strukturerat**. Eleven formulerar sig även med flyt och **viss anpassning** till syfte, mottagare och situation. Eleven bearbetar, och gör **välgrundade och nyanserade** förbättringar av, egna framställningar.

I muntlig och skriftlig interaktion i olika, även mer formella, sammanhang uttrycker sig eleven tydligt, **relativt ledigt** och med flyt samt med anpassning till syfte, mottagare och situation. Dessutom väljer och använder eleven **väl** fungerande strategier som löser problem i och förbättrar interaktionen **och för den framåt på ett konstruktivt sätt**.

Eleven diskuterar **utförligt och nyanserat** några företeelser i olika sammanhang och delar av världen där engelska används, och gör då också **välutvecklade och nyanserade** jämförelser med egna erfarenheter och kunskaper.
Armnesplan - Moderna språk 3 (Gy 2011)

Centralt innehåll

Undervisningen i kursen ska behandla följande centra innehåll:
Kommunikationens innehåll
. Kända ämnesområden; vardagliga situationer, intressen, personer, platser, aktiviteter och aktuella händelser; åsikter, känslor och erfarenheter.
. Levnadssätt, sociala relationer och kulturella företeelser i olika sammanhang och områden där språket används.
Reception
. Tydligt talat språk, även med viss regional färgning, och texter, som är instruerande, beskrivande, berättande, diskuterande och kontaktskapande, även via film och andra medier.
. Samtal och sammanhängande talat språk, till exempel dialoger och intervjuer.
. Berättelser och annan fiktion, även i talad eller dramatiserad form, samt sånger och dikter.
. Enkel sakprosa av olika slag och med olika syften, till exempel nyheter.
. Strategier för att uppfatta detaljer och förstå sammanhang samt för att anpassa lyssnande och läsning till framställningens form, innehåll och syfte.
. Olika sätt att söka, välja och värdera innehållet i texter och talat språk.
. Språkliga företeelser, till exempel uttal, intonation och grammatiska strukturer samt fasta språkliga uttryck, i det språk eleverna möter.
. Hur texter och talat språk varieras utifrån olika syften och sammanhang.
Produktion och interaktion
. Instruktioner, berättelser och beskrivningar i sammanhängande tal och skrift. Diskussioner, samtal och skrivande för kontakt och kommunikation i olika situationer.
. Strategier för att lösa språkliga problem, till exempel med hjälp av omformuleringar och förklaringar.
. Strategier för att bidra till och aktivt medverka i samtal, till exempel genom att ta initiativ till interaktion, lyssna aktivt och avsluta på ett artigt sätt.
. Språklig säkerhet när det gäller till exempel uttal, intonation, fasta språkliga uttryck och grammatiska strukturer, mot tydlighet, variation och anpassning till syfte, mottagare och situation.
**Kunskapskrav**

**Betyget E**
Eleven förstår det huvudsakliga innehållet och uppfattar tydliga detaljer i talat språk i lugnt tempo samt i enkla texter om kända ämnen. Eleven visar sin förståelse genom att i enkel form redogöra för, diskutera och kommentera innehåll och detaljer samt genom att med godtagbart resultat agera utifrån budskap och instruktioner i innehållet. För att underlätta sin förståelse av innehållet i det talade språket och texterna väljer och använder eleven någon strategi för lyssnande och läsning.

Eleven väljer texter och talat språk från olika medier, samt använder med viss relevans det valda materialet i sin egen produktion och interaktion.

I muntliga och skriftliga framställningar av olika slag formulerar sig eleven enkelt, begrippligt och till viss del sammanhängande. För att förtydliga och variera sin kommunikation bearbetar eleven, och gör enkla förbättringar av, egna framställningar.

I muntlig och skriftlig interaktion uttrycker sig eleven begrippligt och enkelt. Dessutom väljer och använder eleven i huvudsak fungerande strategier som i viss mån löser problem i och förbättrar interaktionen.

Eleven diskuterar i enkel form några företeelser i olika sammanhang och områden där språket används, och gör då också enkla jämförelser med egna erfarenheter och kunskaper.

**Betyget D**

Betyget D innebär att kunskapskraven för E och till övervägande del för C är uppfyllda.

**Betyget C**
Eleven förstår det huvudsakliga innehållet och uppfattar väsentliga detaljer i talat språk i lugnt tempo samt i enkla texter om kända ämnen. Eleven visar sin förståelse genom att översiktligt redogöra för, diskutera och kommentera innehåll och detaljer samt genom att med tillfredsställande resultat agera utifrån budskap och instruktioner i innehållet.

För att underlätta sin förståelse av innehållet i det talade språket och texterna väljer och använder eleven i viss utsträckning strategier för lyssnande och läsning.

Eleven väljer texter och talat språk från olika medier, samt använder på ett relevant sätt det valda materialet i sin egen produktion och interaktion.

I muntliga och skriftliga framställningar av olika slag formulerar sig eleven enkelt, relativt tydligt och relativt sammanhängande. För att förtydliga och variera sin kommunikation bearbetar eleven, och gör enkla förbättringar av, egna framställningar.

I muntlig och skriftlig interaktion uttrycker sig eleven relativt tydligt och enkelt samt i någon mån anpassat till syfte, mottagare och situation. Dessutom väljer och använder eleven fungerande strategier som löser problem i och förbättrar interaktionen.
Eleven diskuterar översiktligt några företeelser i olika sammanhang och områden där språket används, och gör då också enkla jämförelser med egna erfarenheter och kunskaper.

**Betyget B**

Betyget B innebär att kunskapskraven för C och till övervägande del för A är uppfyllda.

**Betyget A**

Eleven förstår såväl helhet som detaljer i talat språk i lugnt tempo samt i enkla texter om kända ämnen. Eleven visar sin förståelse genom att välgrundat redogöra för, diskutera och kommentera innehåll och detaljer samt genom att med gott resultat agera utifrån budskap och instruktioner i innehållet.

För att underlätta sin förståelse av innehållet i det talade språket och texterna väljer och använder eleven i viss utsträckning strategier för lyssnande och läsning.

Eleven väljer texter och talat språk från olika medier, samt använder på ett relevant och effektivt sätt det valda materialet i sin egen produktion och interaktion.

I muntliga och skriftliga framställningar av olika slag formulerar sig eleven relativt varierat, tydligt och relativt sammanhängande.

Eleven formulerar sig även med visst flyt och i någon mån anpassat till syfte, mottagare och situation. För att förtydliga och variera sin kommunikation bearbetar eleven, och gör välgrundade förbättringar av, egna framställningar.

I muntlig och skriftlig interaktion uttrycker sig eleven tydligt och med visst flyt samt med viss anpassning till syfte, mottagare och situation. Dessutom väljer och använder eleven väl fungerande strategier som löser problem i och förbättrar interaktionen och för den framåt på ett konstruktivt sätt.

Eleven diskuterar utförligt några företeelser i olika sammanhang och områden där språket används, och gör då också välutvecklade jämförelser med egna erfarenheter och kunskaper.

Retrieved from: http://www.skolverket.se/skolfs?id=1810