Improving Teaching and Learning in Swedish Higher Education:

A Student Centred Perspective
The Swedish National Union of Students, 2014.
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Foreword

On behalf of The Swedish National Union of Students – SFS, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Mona Fjellström, Chair, Swednet; Katarina Mårtensson, Educational developer, Centre for Educational Development, Lund University; Klara Bolander Laksov, Director Unit of Medical Education, Karolinska Institutet and Arshad Ahmad, Associate Vice President, Teaching and Learning, McMaster University, Canada. Without these individuals, the translation of this report would not have been possible.

This report was published in Sweden in May 2013, during an intense public debate in which claims were made by faculty that some students lacked the basic competencies necessary for higher education. While this report was not written in response to this particular debate, the timing allowed us to put higher education pedagogy in the scope of public and political attention on higher education in Sweden.

Ensuring that students meet prerequisites and gain core competencies is an important responsibility of the school system. But what about the other way around? What are reasonable expectations for aspiring students to have regarding their studies in higher education, related to intended learning outcomes in comparison to primary, secondary and other forms of tertiary education? And how do teachers in academia get equipped with a solid capability to meet each student’s preconditions and learning style?

A common reaction to the message and demands put forth in this report was that there is no such thing as higher education pedagogy, only general pedagogy, and that scholars primarily ought to be considered researchers, who simply share their knowledge with curious, ambitious and autonomous students. This reception has taught us that a revolution in the common conception of higher education needs to be achieved. There is a substantial and unsatisfied demand from both students and teachers to put pedagogical development on the agenda, and to create the conditions for scholars to combine their roles as teachers and researchers.

How to achieve such progress, why it is needed, as well as some best-practice examples, are described in the following pages. Everything discussed herein relates to a present Swedish context, but can hopefully inspire educational development in other countries as well!

With hopes of a rewarding reading,
Erik

Erik Arroy
President, The Swedish National Union of Students
May 25, 2014
Stockholm, Sweden
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Preface

Our research has found that post secondary students consider good pedagogy as decisive with respect to determining a high quality education. A university education where good pedagogy is practiced would provide the student with the capacity for critical thinking, independent reasoning and nuanced analysis. University students must meet teachers who are competent both as scholars and as teachers. In order to create the best possible conditions for learning, it is critical that pedagogy be incorporated into the requirements for all university teachers. Yet, this most often is not the case. Many university teachers feel as though it is not worthwhile to focus on the teaching component of their profession. Teachers’ teaching merits should be considered equally as important as their research portfolio. Therefore, training in higher education pedagogy should be made a requirement for teaching at the university level.

Both higher education pedagogical research and work to develop and implement pedagogy at the university level will be necessary in order to improve teaching. The inadequate financing of these areas is therefore a serious problem. As a result of this lack of financing, a large portion of the higher education offerings at Swedish institutions does not reflect current research on higher education teaching and learning. Research on higher education pedagogy based on the reality of Swedish students is a critical anchorage for Sweden to be a successful education nation. It is the Government that bears the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the nation’s educational institutions provide a good quality education. The Swedish National Union of Students is advocating a national focus on the area of research into higher education pedagogy and a national strategy within higher education pedagogy.

Matters related to higher education pedagogy must be made a priority for Swedish universities and other institutions of higher education. A new approach is needed among politicians, university officials and at the level of the individual teacher at these institutions – and, as well, among students. The Swedish National Union of Students call on our institutions of higher education to put the student in the centre of focus, which means abolishing a definition of education in which the student is a passive recipient of knowledge. In order for this to be possible, pedagogy that challenges, stimulates and motivates us in our learning is needed. Such a shift in focus will require teachers to be adequately trained to meet these goals. Naturally, placing the student in the centre of focus in turn raises the requirements incumbent upon us, the students. We are prepared to take on this challenge, because we want a university education that prepares us for the challenges of the future.

This report, by the Swedish National Union of Students offers our proposals for policy changes that will improve our higher education. At the same time, we wish to offer a tool with which educational institutions as well as their student unions can act to ensure improved pedagogy. We therefore present a number of specific challenges that we would like higher education institutes to respond to.
1. Introduction and background

In the current debate on educational policy, quality of pedagogy is a very topical subject. Most recently, the Swedish Government’s arrangement of the national quality assessment system has been the subject of strong criticism from both the higher education institutes themselves, as well as the Swedish National Union of Students. In addition, the lack of quality in education has been addressed in various reports detailing how education is not a priority at the university level, in comparison to research.\(^1\) A discussion of what students themselves think about the quality of the education they receive remains, however, all too often neglected.

In a questionnaire-based investigation carried out in the spring of 2012, the Swedish National Union of Students asked all of its member unions to rate the various factors that serve to promote quality education. The student union representatives responded that pedagogy is the most important factor. The investigation defined pedagogy as instruction that dynamically incorporates a pedagogical design in order to promote effective learning. According to the student unions, pedagogy is also the area that, in addition to adequate evaluation and feedback, is most lacking at the higher education level.\(^2\) The Swedish National Union of Students’ survey has been used as the basis for this report because it demonstrates the absolute necessity of improved pedagogy in our universities and other institutions of higher education.

Naturally, there are many important factors in achieving a quality higher education but in this report we choose to focus on the student unions’ primary priority: pedagogy.

In the work involved in preparing this report, the Swedish National Union of Students met with representatives from the Swedish Association of University Teachers, institute directors through the Association of Swedish Higher Education, as well as, of course, students themselves, through a reference group of students representing different disciplines. All parties confirm the Swedish National Union of Students’ perception of current problems – that an all too great a share of higher education teaching is not up to par.

This report is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, we present the pedagogical approach that we believe should permeate university education, this programme incorporating the Swedish National Union of Students’ essential requirement of placing student learning as the focal point of education. The following chapters detail the areas that need further development in order to effectively improve pedagogy. As part of the report’s conclusion, directed to the Swedish Government and our

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1 See, for example, Berggren, H (2012) IVA (2012) and the Swedish National Audit Office (2012)
2 The Swedish National Union of Students (2012).
nation’s educational institutions, we present a list of necessary changes that the Swedish National Union of Students’ advocates.
1.2 Higher education pedagogy

Pedagogy is generally defined as the scientific investigation into educational and learning processes.\(^3\) The specific area of higher education pedagogical research can be considered an attempt to generate increased knowledge as to how a student actually learns and what differentiates a student at the higher education level from other levels. This area of investigation is highly interdisciplinary in nature and involves everything from subject didactics (also called subject-specific pedagogies)\(^4\) to organisational theory to group psychology.

Practical pedagogy relates to the instruction offered by teachers. The definition of higher education pedagogy as something distinct from pedagogy more generally speaking is not due to some essential difference, or unique point of departure that distinguishes the two. Professional engagement as a teacher of higher education does, however, entail exact pedagogical requirements, which closely relate to the specific goals of tertiary education.

2. Student-centred learning

An obvious starting point for SFS is that students’ learning should be the primary focus of university education. In this introductory chapter, we take a look at what promotes learning and the ways in which a focus on active student learning is significant in terms of determining educational quality.

The last few decades have witnessed a paradigm-shift within pedagogy – a shift from a focus on the transfer of knowledge to the student to a vision where the central focus of education is on the learner and the actual learning process. This shift in fact represents an on-going phenomenon within pedagogical research that stretches back throughout the last century. Yet, a significant change in practical pedagogy, where even the students themselves notice a difference, has been a more recent development. At universities, however, the development is uneven and often completely dependent upon the individual teacher’s interest in pedagogy. Very few students actually experience a teaching programme that consciously incorporates a pedagogical component in which the student’s learning is the centre of focus.

2.1 The research supports active student participatory learning

Learning that incorporates student participation finds broad support in pedagogical research and theory. Active learning is characterized by

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\(^3\) The National Encyclopedia.

\(^4\) The method of teaching a given subject.
The best educational environments are those that emphasise the importance of learning. In these environments, students’ learning is in the centre and, equally significant, there are clear signals from professors and heads of institutions, indicating that the priority is on learning at all levels.\(^1\)

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\(^1\) IVA (2012) pg. 12.
students who construct their knowledge through active reflection. Empirical research shows that what a student actually learns is strongly linked to the student’s relationship to the learning process. Two main learning strategies have been identified – one that is more superficial in nature, and the other being more “deep,” or active, in nature. In somewhat simple terms, it can be said that a student who applies a superficial learning strategy learns fragments of information without searching for a context or relationships among these fragments, or building some form of understanding; nor do they relate what they are learning to their own experiences. On the other hand, a student who applies an active learning strategy exercises an active attempt to understand a given concept and the main message behind what they are learning, and moreover relates this to previously acquired knowledge and experience. This leads not only to a more profound understanding and firmer grounding of the knowledge attained, but also grants the student the opportunity to exercise her critical and independent thinking skills. In order to promote this type of learning, an active learning perspective should be incorporated into all aspects of an educational programme. Research has demonstrated the significance of both the actual instruction as well as the assessment tools that promote active learning. When exams are designed in such way that they award rote memorization, students will largely opt for a superficial learning process. Other phenomena that promote superficial learning include unclear requirements, the absence of relevant feedback, “curriculum overload” and the lack of adequate opportunity for students to influence the teaching structure including the educational design and content.

An approach according to which the student’s own participation and motivation to learn is the most significant effectively shifts the central focus from the teacher to the student. This means that the choice of teaching format must be reassessed. In certain educational literature dealing with pedagogy, the term “learning” is actually avoided, due to its association with “rostrum teaching,” where the focus is on the activities of the teacher. Graham Gibbs, commissioned by the Higher Education Academy to make a compilation of what the current research says concerning the factors which promote and advance the quality of education, for example, stated, indeed rather boldly, that “teaching is detrimental to learning.” The preferred term is instead “learning activities,” which can be planned by the teacher but are also entirely based upon the student’s own initiative. The starting point for all learning activities should be to support learning in view of attaining the learning outcomes. Teaching, however, is an established concept that will most likely not disappear from discussions of university education any time soon. As long as teaching (including other learning activities) and the planning that surrounds it, is based upon research into what actually promotes learning among students, quality education can be

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6 The students are overburdened in terms of what they are required to learn.
7 Ramsden, P (1992) pg. 81.
8 The British national body dedicated to the promotion of excellence in teaching and learning in universities. http://www.heacademy.ac.uk
9 Interview with Graham Gibbs, LUM No. 10 1996.
attained. Since research is of essential importance in the university environment it should therefore be obvious that teaching should be designed to incorporate a pedagogical approach based on the student’s active learning – that research has indeed found most favourable in terms of promoting learning.

2.2 Increase student participation in all disciplines

An approach in which teaching is considered an issue of general quality, regardless of the subject or discipline, can be problematic. A given pedagogical approach will be differentiated from other approaches depending on the educational goals. Resources are also influential and different disciplines have different allocations per student. While there is no universal model of what a good educational environment should look like, we can see that the common factors that establish high educational quality, regardless of discipline, is an approach that makes student participation the central focus of instruction and learning.

The teaching methods a student will encounter differ markedly among various disciplines, not least of all in terms of the hours of instruction. According to a survey from 2009, three out of every ten full-time students received fewer than six hours of teacher-led teaching time during the week, and over half of all students meet their teacher less than nine hours per week. Students within the humanities and social sciences receive the least amount of teacher-led instruction. It is also within these subjects that the students (with the exception of certain subjects) indicate that they dedicate the least amount of time to their studies. The requirement of increased teacher instruction is one way in which to create a measurable goal to increase the quality of education, foremost within the social sciences and humanities. But it is important to not confuse quality with quantity. In order to increase quality, more resources are needed, but these must be put to good use. Research shows that resources affect the quality of education but only provided that the resources are dedicated to ends that actually have a positive impact on student learning. A lot of instruction time with poor quality or in the wrong format is a significant problem, particularly among students of engineering and natural sciences. Here, it is not a problem of insufficient resources, but instead of insufficient knowledge of, and motivation, to create a pedagogical program incorporating a student-participatory model. Quality of instruction is quite simply not made a priority in these disciplines. Ways institutions can use resources in order to influence student learning positively, regardless of subject or discipline, include recruiting talented and competent teachers, providing

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10 The yearly allocation is approximately SEK 42,500 per student in humanitarian and social sciences-related subjects and around SEK 92,500 for engineering and natural science-related disciplines. Included in these amounts are both allocations per full-time equivalent and annual performance. Source ESO (2012) pg. 84.
11 See Gärdebo, J. and Wiggberg, M (2012) pg. 7 et seq.
13 ESO (2012) pg. 89.
pedagogical support and continued training to actively engage teachers and small student groups.\textsuperscript{14}

To achieve a high level of student participation in education, small groups are often a key factor. Fewer hours of instruction involving a high level of student participation and personal feedback are preferable to many hours of lectures in large halls involving no student participation.\textsuperscript{15} It is moreover important that the content of the pedagogy facilitates and inspires learning based on student participation that continues in-between actual teaching sessions (on-going in nature).\textsuperscript{16} It should be pointed out, however, that with the right pedagogy, student participation can be achieved even in larger groups. One example is Peer Instruction. Eric Mazur, Professor in Physics at Harvard University, has generated a specific methodology for Peer Instruction, which refers to the process in which students learn from each other. It promotes more in-depth learning. According to this programme, lectures incorporate essential questions, so-called ConcepTests, whose purpose is to illustrate any difficulties in terms of the understanding of the material. The students are given two minutes to think through a given question and formulate an answer, and are then given two to three minutes to discuss the answer in small groups consisting of three to four students and decide upon the correct answer. The process forces students to think through their argumentation (reasoning) and effectively gain a real understanding at the time of being presented with the material.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{The best educational environments are those that emphasise the importance of learning. In these environments, students’ learning is in the centre and, equally significant, there are clear signals from professors and heads of institutions, indicating that the priority is on learning at all levels.}\textsuperscript{18}

\section{2.3 Promote student-centred learning in accordance with the Bologna Process}

The Bologna process was created with the aim of increasing European mobility, and in order to increase the quality and attractiveness of higher education programs.\textsuperscript{19} According to this programme, participatory learning, based on placing the individual student in focus (“in the centre”), is advocated with the aim of improved quality of education. This view of the student as the centre of

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{14} Kettis, Å (2011) pg. 171 et seq.
\textsuperscript{15} Gibbs, G (2010) pg. 22.
\textsuperscript{16} One example is Supplemental instruction (SI), where the students, according to a designed programme, meet in smaller-sized groups after the instruction sessions in order to provide mutual support for their respective learning, Source: Gills, C and Holmer, A (2012) pg. 45.
\textsuperscript{17} http://mazur.harvard.edu
\textsuperscript{18} IVA (2012) pg. 12.
\textsuperscript{19} Prop. 2009/10:139, pg. 6.
\end{footnotesize}
Higher Education Ordinance Section 1(14)

Institutions of higher education should give participating students, and students who have already completed a given course, the opportunity to express their experiences and opinions by means of a course evaluation coordinated by the institution.

Universities should compile course evaluations and also provide information to students as to the results and any decisions that are taken further to these course evaluations. The results should be made available to the students.
focus, or student-centred learning, has been part of the Bologna Process since 2009. Sweden, too, has specifically undertaken to promote student-centred learning through the signing of the Communiqué by its ministers in Leuven in 2009. At the ministerial conference in Bucharest in 2012, the defined targets of the Process were updated.

Student-centred learning is not, however, a term that was developed in the context of the Bologna Process, but rather it is a concept originating in pedagogical theory’s attempt to further develop participatory learning. The concept is multi-faceted and there are various theoretical perspectives as to how student-centred education should be implemented. Here we are basing ourselves on a handbook on student-centred learning issued by the European Students’ Union (ESU) and Education International (EI) developed in the context of the EU-financed project, “Time for a New Paradigm in Education: Student-Centred Learning.” Student-centred learning is described as both an approach to teaching and a university culture in which the student herself actively constructs her own knowledge, as opposed to older traditions according to which the teacher brokers, or “transfers” knowledge or skills to the student. According to the authors of the handbook, student-centred learning creates a relationship built on mutual curiosity and respect between the teacher and student, and they believe that this framework facilitates the best possible learning environment. Student-centred learning shares certain basic values, or concepts, with participatory learning, but specifically aims to create more flexible teaching methods and options, and aims to increase student participation.

Student-centred learning is a logical part of the Bologna Process, after the inclusion of learning goals to describe the level of knowledge, understanding and skills that each student should have attained after having completed a given class. As of July 2007, all curricula and exam descriptions should contain specific learning goals. The reform aims to promote student-centred learning by promoting the student’s ability to approach learning goals based on his or her learning process. It is unclear whether students have actually noticed a real change in perspective.

According to the Bucharest Communiqué from 2012, the Bologna countries are supposed to actively create the conditions for student-centred learning through the promotion of innovative educational methods and a supportive and inspiring working and learning environment, while including students and employees in decision-

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22 ESU/EI (2010).
23 ESU (2012) pg. 87, et seq.
making structures at all levels.\textsuperscript{25} Even within the EU, there is an official engagement to improve the quality of instruction within universities and other institutions of higher education. The Commission has established a high-level committee that will be issuing recommendations to governmental decision-makers and institutions of higher education in 2013 as to how quality of instruction and learning can be promoted. A few EU countries have also issued their own national strategies to promote the quality of university education. Sweden, however, is not included in this group.

It is important that Sweden undertake a national-level action-based strategy to promote the introduction of student-centred learning in universities in pursuance of its undertakings under the Bologna Process. A national strategy should be established aimed at improving the instruction provided in institutions of higher education, in which student learning is the main focus. Naturally, the strategy should be created in collaboration with students and representatives of universities and other institutions of higher education, as well as the many higher education pedagogy experts that are active in learning establishments throughout the country.

2.4 Motivate students to take responsibility

Participatory learning means that each individual student takes responsibility for his or her learning. A recent Danish research study found that students today place far greater requirements on the level of instruction than they did before, and that this leads to conflict with their teacher who often lacks knowledge of how to promote the most effective learning. At the same time, the study concludes that students do not do a good job in terms of accepting responsibility for their learning. This is partly due to time pressures coupled with the amount of material that must be absorbed. Many students feel as though they receive insufficient feedback from their teachers. This leads to superficial learning whereby the student reproduces knowledge, but absorbs no real understanding of the course material.\textsuperscript{26}

Research indicates that student success is closely linked to motivation. Indeed, the one single factor that creates the best conditions for in-depth learning and that is of major significance in determining test results is the students’ motivation in the context of learning.\textsuperscript{27} Many students are now demanding a participatory education. In a questionnaire survey involving over 3000 students from Uppsala University, 80% replied that it is very or quite important that the teachers include stimulating active participation in their lectures.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{25} Freely translated from the Bucharest Communiqué, EHEA Ministerial Conference, Bucharest 2012.
\textsuperscript{26} HSV (2012) see Lassesen, B (2011).
\textsuperscript{28} Hedin, A (2006) pg. 66.
However, not all students appreciate instruction that is participatory in nature. It is important to consider that just as teachers require knowledge of methods and approaches that promote learning, students too require knowledge of the actual learning process. Students’ understanding of learning is central and determinative as to their choice of, and approach to, a course. Therefore, it is essential to explain and discuss the purpose of participation with students on an individual basis. If it is clear to students what is expected of them in the course of their university education, it becomes easier for them to take personal responsibility for their studies.

2.5 Use student opinions

In the survey performed by SFS in 2012, the member organizations responded that “evaluation and feedback” were those areas that, in combination with pedagogy, are most effective in terms of improving the quality of higher education. Naturally, these two areas are closely linked.

In course evaluations, students should be given the opportunity to reflect, in a structured manner, upon their education and learning. An evaluation is an essential tool for the development of quality education. It is therefore important that evaluations are drawn up correctly and in a thoughtful, well-reasoned manner, in order to adequately promote the development of the given course. The Higher Education Ordinance (SFS 1993:100) contains provisions stipulating that course evaluations should be performed for each course and feedback provided to the students. The legislative historical documentation for this ordinance indicates that course evaluations should be interactive. Students should receive clear feedback and see that their views and opinions have a real impact on each course.

Course evaluations have the potential to constitute a powerful instrument of development for the university. It is therefore regrettable that course evaluations are all too often regarded as a “must do” that is performed and then stuffed into a folder without any follow-up, feedback or discussion among students, teachers or administrators. Evaluations that are performed after the conclusion of a course tend not to elicit a particularly high response rate among students. This is particularly true if during the course the students did not observe an active feedback process or that their evaluations led to any actual changes. It is therefore important to explain to the students the purpose of course

29 Schyberg, S (2009) pg. 54, et seq.
31 see the report’s introduction for a reference to the questionnaire
34 Higher Education Ordinance Section 1(14) Course evaluation involves, in addition to administering course evaluations among the students, collecting teacher experiences and also evaluating test results.
Student: “Teachers kind of like tip-toe around it. They think that I have a hard time understanding when in fact I have a hard time reading. It’s not really the same thing.”

evaluations, as well as the manner in which their current, and earlier, evaluations actually impacted on the teaching the students receive. Teachers have been known to sometimes express to their students that they have a sceptical view of course evaluations. This is unfortunate since this signals to the students that they are not taken seriously and that their opinions will be ignored. Although there are no guarantees, course evaluations definitely and without exception lead to improved quality of any given course, and there is no reason to underestimate the ability of students to assess the instruction they receive. Research has shown, for example, that students throughout a given course of instruction, even at the start, make similar assessments as their colleagues and alumnae as to the competence of a given teacher.\textsuperscript{37}

It is extremely disturbing that university students experience course evaluations as a problem area. Educational institutions must take student dissatisfaction seriously and work using a focused strategy to ensure that student opinions are taken into account more effectively. One aspect of this work will involve ensuring greater competence among teachers, so that course evaluations are included as a natural part of a pedagogical programme. Incentives should be created at institutions to use course evaluations in an effort to promote quality. Evaluations should be made a central tool, in fact. This goal can be accomplished within the context of the national quality evaluation system.

\textit{Higher Education Ordinance Section 1(14)}

\textit{Institutions of higher education should give participating students, and students who have already completed a given course, the opportunity to express their experiences and opinions by means of a course evaluation coordinated by the institution.}

\textit{Universities should compile course evaluations and also provide information to students as to the results and any decisions that are taken further to these course evaluations. The results should be made available to the students.}

\section*{2.6 Meeting the individual needs of students}

Knowledge and a consciousness of differences and differing needs among students increase the possibility of meeting the needs of individual students with respect, understanding and curiosity. Studies have shown, for example, that teachers are of highly influential in terms of motivation and results among students with reading and writing difficulties.\textsuperscript{38} A flexible attitude in a teacher facilitates studying and learning for many students. If a teacher is clear on the goals of a given course, which will be subject to evaluation, and considers learning activities as a means with which to reach these goals, these means are allowed to look differently for each student as long as they achieve the course objectives.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{37} Elmgren, M and Henriksson A-S, pg. 101, et seq.
\textsuperscript{38} Eriksson Gustavsson, A-L (2011) pg. 20.
Students have different learning styles, which means that they assimilate and process information on an individual basis. Varied forms of instruction allow for a greater number of students to become motivated and ultimately learn more effectively. The issue of whether participatory learning excludes certain students has been raised. While participatory learning may not be appropriate for all students, there is considerable variety among the different types of participatory learning activities. Insofar as a teacher is aware of all of these and how they work at the level of the individual student, all students can be given the opportunity to engage with their own learning in a constructive manner.

As our student corps increases in size, as well as diversity and heterogeneity, the number of students with special needs has also increased including students with neuropsychiatric or reading and writing difficulties. At all universities, there is a special coordinator charged with providing services to students with disabilities. In order to qualify for pedagogical support, at most institutions a student must be able to substantiate their disability by means of a certification/medical proof of disability.

**Greater numbers of students with disabilities**

![Chart showing increase in number of students with disabilities from 1997 to 2009.](chart.png)

**Caption:**
The National Coordination Network compiles annual figures indicating the number of students that have sought support from a coordinator at a national university or other institution of higher education due to a disability. For the year 2011, this number was 8,455.

According to the Swedish Discrimination Act (SFS 2008:567), universities and other institutions of higher education must ensure that all students have access to the same rights and opportunities. This means that these institutions must ensure that their learning facilities are equally accessible and usable as achievable through the

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40 Ibid, pg. 80.
41 Andersson, S (2012) pg. 27.
implementation of reasonable measures. However, according to the preparatory documentation for this Act, the definition of accessibility does not include ease-of-use and access to course literature and other study material. According to the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, disabled students receive pedagogical support at most institutions anyway, despite the lack of an explicit requirement for such in the legislation. In order to ensure support for all students with a disability, it is necessary to further expand the accessibility requirement, so that pedagogical support is also included.

Student: “Teachers kind of like tip-toe around it. They think that I have a hard time understanding when in fact I have a hard time reading. It’s not really the same thing.”

3. Training in higher-level pedagogy for better instruction

Nearly all teachers will agree, when discussing the subject of their instruction, that existing research should obviously be further developed and expanded. And yet when it comes to the instruction they offer, many of these teachers believe they know how things should be done, without in fact having any specific knowledge of higher-level pedagogical research and how the actual learning process works. Insufficient knowledge of pedagogy leads to students ultimately receiving a lower quality of education. In order for students to receive the instruction that will best promote their learning, universities must ensure that teachers have received training in higher education pedagogical instruction.

3.1 Ten-week higher education pedagogy training module should be a requirement

Thanks to the autonomy reform, the Higher Education Ordinance no longer places any requirements on teachers completing training in higher-education pedagogy. The requirements that were included in the Ordinance from 2003-2010 stipulated nothing as to how comprehensive the training should be. The Swedish Association of Higher Education (SUHF), on the other hand, made recommendations and goal descriptions

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45 The Swedish Discrimination Act (2008:567)
46 HSV (2012) pg. 5.
47 The inclusion of pedagogical support was advocated in the Departmental pro-memorium, Beyond isolated incidents – on insufficient accessibility as a form of discrimination, Ds 2010:20, pg. 149, et seq.
50 Investigators had proposed a requirement on a completed course in third-level pedagogy corresponding to ten weeks’ full time instruction for eligibility to be hired as an adjunct professor, lecturer or full-time professor. The scope of the training was not, however, taken up in the corresponding Proposition drawn up by the Government. The open university (Prop 2001/02:15) pg. 94.
”He [the teacher] has the capacity to be curious and develop the teaching in such way that the students learn more and have an easier time assimilating the knowledge imparted. The instruction comprises several different aspects such as exercises, homework exercises, lab work, problem-solving exercises and instruction in order accommodate the fact that students learn in different ways.”

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1 From the recitals - Professor Bernt Nilsson at the Department of Chemical Engineering at Lund University received the 2012 Student Prize for excellence in teaching at Lund University (2012)
for qualifying higher education pedagogical instruction that requires at least ten weeks of full time study. The recommendations were updated after the requirement on higher education pedagogy was removed from the test of the Ordinance. The aim of SUHF’s recommendations is for institutions to have a common vision of training in higher education pedagogy, and that a teacher who has successfully completed this certification at a recognised educational institution will have their training recognised at other institutions. According to the recommendations, educational institutions should ensure that all teachers have completed training in higher education pedagogy once they are employed on a permanent basis. SUHF issued guidelines on learning objectives for the qualification of training in higher education pedagogy.

Since the schools themselves, either in their employment policies or in other specific policies, decide upon requirements for university education, certain institutions accept less than ten weeks. For example, Stockholm University accepts five weeks of training. Any professor having completed less than five weeks of training in higher education pedagogy must participate in a five-week course within two years of being hired as an adjunct professor, lecturer or professor.

It is unfortunate that the requirement of the higher education pedagogy training component disappeared from the text of the Ordinance, since the requirement led to more teachers having basic knowledge of instruction and learning processes. The fact that not all institutions align themselves with SUHF guidelines is unusual and clearly shows that a regulatory ordinance is indeed necessary. SFS would like to see that the requirement of higher education pedagogy instruction is included in the Higher Education Ordinance, and updated to a requirement of ten weeks.

### 3.2 All teachers should be subject to requirement on higher-education pedagogy training

Many have testified to a generational change in our institutions of higher education, where younger teachers are often more engaged and curious as to pedagogy, while also better trained as teachers. That being said, it is not the case that there are no innovative and well-liked older teachers. There are numerous examples of older teachers who have received various pedagogy distinctions from student associations. And yet, among the group of older teachers, there are fewer individuals who have completed training in higher education pedagogy, a phenomenon that does hold back the development of optimal learning environments. Teachers who have been employed for a long time at the university level exercise a great deal of influence and enjoy considerable responsibility over both the context of teaching and administering tests and

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51 SUHF (2005) Recommendations
52 SUHF (2010)
53 SUHF (2005) Objectives
54 Stockholm University (2012)
“In order to be successful as a researcher today it is essentially necessary to be a full-time researcher and I see tendencies towards more and more of a division between those who “research” and those who “teach,” even if in practice the majority of us do a bit of both. Research clearly enjoys a higher status, and issues related to teaching practice and methodology often falls by the wayside as more and more teachers focus on research.” Comment from: “Who should do what? A study of the link between research and education,” ¹

evaluations. It is therefore important that not only newly-employed teachers but also long-term teachers are trained in higher education pedagogy. Otherwise, there is a risk of discouraging better-qualified teachers in their ambitions to develop pedagogically well-founded courses.

It is common for doctoral students and adjunct professors to lecture, even though they lack higher education pedagogy training. Some institutions have established recommendations that doctoral students and adjunct faculty members complete a brief training programme in higher education pedagogy. Other institutions require adjunct faculty to complete the same training in higher education pedagogy as that completed by tenured educators. This is certainly a reasonable provision given that the main task of an adjunct professor is indeed to teach. As regards doctoral students, testimony has been forthcoming to the effect that these teachers are sometimes completely lacking in preparation and are thrown into teaching scenarios. Results of such experiments have yielded varying results, sometimes very poor. This is a pity since doctoral students, as with professors employed on an adjunct basis, sometimes lay claim to solid potential as an asset for student instruction.

There is considerable support for the view that certain teachers in the academy are quite simply not appropriate for teaching and cannot be improved. In a preliminary study, students identified three factors among teachers that predisposed them to poor quality instruction:

1) unfavourable personality traits (mumbles, speaks in incomplete sentences, does not look directly at the students, and similar behaviour)

2) insufficient knowledge of teaching techniques

3) has a negative view of teaching and students

According to students, these three factors must be taken into account in order for a teacher to be able to improve. Included in the study were also a few teachers who had received poor feedback from the students but who then allowed themselves to be filmed in order to receive training in an attempt to improve. This resulted in the teachers learning how to take a more pedagogically sound approach to their instruction and, in turn, activating their students’ thinking through discussions and relevant questions. The conclusion of the study was that the students were much happier with the instruction they received and that the instruction was generally much more effective. This result persisted even when the students’ level of satisfaction was assessed eight months later.55

It is important that all teachers active in institutions of higher education receive training in higher education pedagogy; new teachers, experienced teachers, professors, adjunct teachers and doctoral candidates. It is only in this way that the best possible conditions for students to encounter teaching methods actually based on higher education pedagogy research

and evaluated experiences are created. The requirement should be that adjunct teachers are given at least ten weeks of training in higher education pedagogy, and doctoral candidates at least five weeks. The time that is allocated to the training should be counted as assigned university credit or considered service, or included under the rubric of research activity. It should not simply be considered as an add-on to regular work and tasks.

3.3 Set aside time for the development of pedagogy

In order for teachers to be able to capitalise upon the training in higher education pedagogy and turn it into increased quality of instruction, it is not enough that the teachers simply have the knowledge that they have acquired. Instead, they must also know how to apply it. Teachers at institutions of higher education complain of time deficiencies and insufficient resources, which often prove a hindrance to the implementation of pedagogy. And yet, time invested often does pay off in the long run since teachers become more effective and more adaptable to changes.56

All instruction, even that of the highest quality, must be further developed in order to meet the needs and speed of an ever-evolving society. New students have different expectations and experiences from their predecessors. At the level of the individual teacher, the development of pedagogy means working to accommodate change. This can mean changing something that students have expressed their dissatisfaction with, or that the teachers themselves feel should be improved. But, it can also be the case that through newly acquired knowledge within the field of higher education pedagogy, the teacher is inspired to further develop the instruction they provide. Factors that inspire this initiative among higher education teachers is active interest among university administrators and good communication with students and colleagues.57

The decision by institutions of learning to specifically earmark time for research in higher education pedagogy and career development is considered a very important determinative factor of teaching quality.58

"He [the teacher] has the capacity to be curious and develop the teaching in such way that the students learn more and have an easier time assimilating the knowledge imparted. The instruction comprises several different aspects such as exercises, homework exercises, lab work, problem-solving exercises and instruction in order accommodate the fact that students learn in different ways."59

56 Elmgren, M och Henriksson, A-S, pg. 283
57 Ibid.
58 IVA (2012) pg. 13
59 From the recitals - Professor Bernt Nilsson at the Department of Chemical Engineering at Lund University received the 2012 Student Prize for excellence in teaching at Lund University (2012)
4. Award system for pedagogical competence

Teaching merits are still not accorded the same importance as a teacher’s research portfolio when considered for employment and the promotion of academic personnel. This was revealed in a recently completed questionnaire study among directors, administrative officials, vice-administrators, program coordinators and programme leaders. 81 percent consider that research is given the most importance, while 2 percent answered that teaching merit was given the most weight, while 17 percent considered that research and teaching were evaluated on equal grounds. Nor is being a good teacher appreciated and noticed particularly among employers. This most likely means that a poor teacher is not noticed either.60

At the start of the 1990s, a requirement was introduced into the Higher Education Ordinance, whereby it was deemed that pedagogical competence should be required for eligibility for a teaching post at the university level. Even if it is the case that developments have gone in the right direction, the above-mentioned survey shows that pedagogical competence has still not received the importance at the university level that corresponds to the intention behind its statutory introduction. In order to reach this level of consciousness, a goal-oriented strategy is needed, in which pedagogical competence is an absolute priority. In order to assess pedagogical competence, institutions of higher education need a definition, clear criteria, appropriate material and qualified assessors. It is also necessary that pedagogical qualification be weighed equally to research-related merits.

4.1 Define pedagogical competence

Pedagogical competence is presently considered to not only include competence in the area of teaching skills, but also relates to the teacher’s ability to observe what is happening during class and relate what she has observed to her knowledge of how student learning occurs. One way to increase the pedagogical competence is to formulate a definition of pedagogical competence.

It is important to create a common basis of evaluation and to clarify what universities are striving for. Different institutions of higher education and profiles can also assign different nuances to this complex concept. During the past ten years, a number of schools have defined pedagogical competence. Uppsala University was the first, with the following definition from 2003:

"Pedagogical competence can be described as the capacity and desire to regularly apply the approach, attitude, knowledge and skills that most optimally promote learning among one’s students. This shall be done in accordance with existing goals and objectives, and framework, and necessarily involves the continuous development of the teacher’s individual competence as well as of the format and content of the instruction being offered."61

60 IVA (2012) pg. 11, et seq.
61 Ryegård, Å et al. (2012) pg. 12.
One student in an SFS reference group, who is studying at the master’s level and who is also a student representative, describes the following: “Those teachers who support the implementation of a system for the recognition of merit for competence in instruction often encounter a dripping sarcasm from their colleagues, particularly from older colleagues.”
In order to be hired as a university teacher, according to the Higher Education Ordinance, the teacher must have proven both research-related merit as well as pedagogical competence. According to the text of the Ordinance, “the assessment of pedagogical competence should be treated with the same degree of care as the assessment of scientific or creative competence.” And yet, pedagogical competence is still not accorded a particularly high value in comparison to scholarly competence, which leads to teachers often prioritizing research before instruction. An exaggerated focus by an institution of higher education on the scholarly merits of its teachers does not bode well for the quality of the education offered at that institution. A common denominator for environments offering good instructional environments is that there is a culture where instruction and research are considered complementary and of equal importance. In order to achieve the relationship or link to research that is of crucial importance in the context of higher education, it is necessary that the research be linked to the instruction received by students in a manner that is conscious of the pedagogical aspects involved.

It is of essential importance that each institution of learning formulates and makes visible their definition of pedagogical competence. Those schools that have issued a definition of pedagogy have witnessed a process that is richly instructive and that strengthens the development of pedagogy at that institution. Continued work will include the development of comprehensive criteria to define pedagogical competence. Mälardalen University has done this, amongst other institutions.

“In order to be successful as a researcher today it is essentially necessary to be a full-time researcher and I see tendencies towards more and more of a division between those who “research” and those who “teach,” even if in practice the majority of us do a bit of both. Research clearly enjoys a higher status, and issues related to teaching practice and methodology often falls by the wayside as more and more teachers focus on research.” Comment from: “Who should do what? A study of the link between research and education.”

### 4.2 Document merits in pedagogical portfolios

Pedagogical merits constitute the basic material that a teacher will present in order to substantiate their pedagogical competence. The merits are assessed by experts capable of making a qualitative assessment of pedagogical competence. In order for experts to be able to measure pedagogical competence, it is necessary that the documentation for assessment is sufficient. This requires, in turn, that the individual teacher has solid knowledge of how pedagogical merits are documented.

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62 IVA (2012) pg. 11, et seq.
64 See for example, Jenkins, A, et al. (2007).
65 Mälardalen University (2012).
One reason that scholarly merits tend to be accorded greater weight than pedagogical background in the context of employment and promotion can, beyond tradition, be that it is deemed easier to assess. There is a built-in system for reviewing the quality of academic merit, in everything from doctoral exams to peer-review procedures and assessment groups in the context of research boards.\(^{67}\) Knowledge can be documented while measurement of pedagogical competence is considerably more limited. Unreliable assessment and poor documentation is a recurring problem.\(^{68}\)

It is difficult for educators to demonstrate the quality of their pedagogical practices in a traditional CV since this presentation usually consists of a quantitative list of merits. A singular focus on the documentation of pedagogical merits has proven an obstacle to reaching the goal of pedagogical competence being valued on equal grounds to scholarly and research merits. Oftentimes, the basic documentation that is presented for analysis by experts and professional associations is rather inadequate. The inclusion of descriptions of pedagogical competence in pedagogical portfolios, sometimes called “merit portfolios,” is therefore a positive development. This format allows teachers to document planning, implementation/application, and evaluation. It also promotes teachers’ capacity to extrapolate upon theory learned, and their active reflection upon the practical implementation of theoretical frameworks. For example, the ways in which the students are supported during the learning process, or collaboration with colleagues, may be incorporated.\(^{69}\)

Documented performance in various pedagogical contexts is necessary in order to have an accurate assessment of the pedagogical competence of an individual teacher. This is why pedagogical portfolios are deemed a better tool than, for example, a test lecture, and is also more similar to the published descriptions found in scholarly findings. Naturally, pedagogical portfolios should be supplemented with an interview at the time of assessment for employment or promotion; an assessed lecture can absolutely be used to complement a pedagogical portfolio, however cannot replace it.

In order for assessments of pedagogical competence to be successfully grounded on qualitative measures, pedagogical portfolios must be required. One precondition for compliance with this requirement is that educational institutions must support teachers’ work with creating pedagogical portfolios by drawing up clear instructions as to how the portfolios should look.

\(^{67}\) Oldsjö, F (2010) pg. 48.
\(^{68}\) Ryegård et al. (2010) pg. 3.
\(^{69}\) Oldsjö, F (2010) pg. 49, et seq.
4.3 Use pedagogically-competent consultants in the assessment of pedagogical preparedness

Pedagogical preparedness refers to knowledge of both the theoretical and practical aspects of higher education pedagogy. Assessing pedagogical competence is a difficult task and requires, in addition to the assessors being in possession of the relevant knowledge, a definition and criteria of pedagogical competence, as well as the existence of a complete pedagogical portfolio for assessment. According to studies incorporating these aspects, assessments largely yield the same results when the same material is independently assessed by pedagogy experts.70

In employment practices at educational institutions, scientific experts or scholars are chosen to assess the scholarly merits of a given applicant for employment. These same individuals often times are responsible for the assessment of pedagogical competence as well, yet they lack the appropriate competence to do so. This procedure is indeed problematic. The likely consequence of this practice is that pedagogical competence is not considered as equally important as scientific, or scholarly merits.71

There is a move within a few educational institutions towards hiring pedagogically competent professionals to undertake the assessment of the pedagogical merit of teaching candidates. While this is a positive development the idea that scientific experts are qualified for the task of assessing pedagogical competence persists within many institutions. These scholars are believed sufficiently competent to determine pedagogical preparedness, even when they lack the specific competence of an expert in pedagogy.72 This practice effectively hinders the otherwise positive development aimed at the promotion of pedagogy at higher education learning institutions.

Students should be considered the main focus when it comes to determining pedagogical competence. The choice to hire a pedagogy expert to offer support to teacher appointment associations and similar bodies involved in recruitment improves the possibility for participant student representatives to be duly represented and heard in terms of their needs for pedagogical competence.

In order to ensure that pedagogical merits are subject to comprehensive and qualitative assessment, all universities and other institutions of higher education must effectively implement provisions stipulating that pedagogy experts are brought on board for the assessment of the pedagogical competence of all educators.

4.4 Introduce a pedagogical award system at all institutions

70 Ryegård, Å et al. (2010) pg. 18.
71 Oldsjö, F (2010) pg. 53.
72 Ryegård, Å et al. (2010) pg. 17.
In order for the prioritization of instruction and the maintenance of good quality, pedagogical competence must be awarded. Pedagogical competence is important in the context of selection for employment and promotion, but should also be awarded in the context of allocating a position of employment, for example, with titles of distinction and pay bonuses. Some institutions of higher learning have already introduced or are currently at work with the implementation of an award system to recognise pedagogical merit. The Faculty of Engineering (LTH) at Lund University was first to introduce in 2001 a “pedagogical merit system,” incorporating a pedagogy academy to which teachers can apply, inter alia, by providing certification of their pedagogy portfolio merits. A teacher who meets the criteria of pedagogical competence is accepted to the LTH Pedagogy Academy. Teachers are given the distinction of Excellent Teaching Practitioner (ETP) and enjoy an immediate salary increase. In addition, the institution where that teacher is employed is awarded an increased allocation.\(^{73}\)

Other institutions that work with an award system are for example, Mälardalen University College, which in 2008 introduced a pedagogy competence scale.\(^{74}\) Karolinska Institute has established a pedagogy academy\(^{75}\) and Uppsala University has recently introduced the title of “excellent teacher,” a distinction qualifying the awarded teacher for an automatic salary increase.\(^{76}\) Other institutions of learning have also either introduced or are in varying stages in the introduction of an award system for the recognition of pedagogical skill, while other institutions have discussed ‘pedagogy career alternatives’ without effectively reaching a solution.\(^{77}\)

And yet, according to experts in the field, actual reform is mostly on paper, while values, hierarchies and praxis remain largely unchanged. The fact that the process is so slow may indicate that those within the academy are not particularly interested in considering instruction as worthy of being assessed in terms of merit. The prestige of achievements in research continues to exercise considerable influence. Even if the situation differs among different educational institutions and fields of study, on the whole, there is limited motivation in the system spurring teachers to effectively develop their pedagogical skills. As opposed to research findings, it remains more important how much instruction a given teacher offers, as opposed to the actual quality of that instruction.\(^{78}\)

In order to improve higher-level education, it is necessary for each institution to develop and implement an award system to assess pedagogical skills. Award systems should be implemented in a comprehensive manner, throughout the given organisation, in order to be successful. There must be both structures and arenas wherein

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\(^{73}\) Faculty of Engineering (LTH), Lund University (2012)
\(^{74}\) Ryegård, Å et al. (2010) pg. 18
\(^{75}\) Karolinska Institute (2012)
\(^{76}\) Uppsala University (2012)
\(^{77}\) Ryegård et al. (2010) pg. 21
\(^{78}\) Oldsjö, F (2010) pg. 43.
pedagogy-related discourse can take place, such as pedagogy seminars, conferences and newsletters. Finally, it is important that it makes sense for teachers to allocate both time and energy to the quality of their instruction. Recognition alone is not enough, and instead, financial compensation should also be forthcoming. An institution that rewards scholarly achievements with increased salary and increases in funding must also reward pedagogical competence with comparable financial terms. This is necessary in order to offer effective proof that pedagogical and scientific/scholarly competences are considered two equally important aspects of a university teacher’s competence.\(^79\)

### 4.5 Action for a pedagogical award system at the national level

It is well known and accepted that a pedagogy-based merit system is necessary in order to promote the advancement of pedagogy.\(^80\) And yet, the long-standing patterns in the fabric of our universities are, however, difficult to change. In order for such a merit system to be successfully implemented, systematic efforts are necessary. In order for all students, regardless of the institution with which they are associated, to receive an improved instruction and education, it is necessary to promote, at the national level, the introduction of a pedagogical merit system at all institutions of higher learning. It is, however, naturally up to the individual teacher to decide on such systems, but since this is a process that is largely resistant to change, catalysts, or stimulating factors, will be necessary.

The parallel systems used to accord merit that are established at different institutions of higher learning risk creating barriers to teachers taking their titles and merits with them to other institutions. The no longer operational “Authority for Networking and Collaboration within Higher Education” worked to support the work of universities with the advancement of pedagogy and also actively implemented projects that have had a huge impact in terms of collecting and then disseminating knowledge. One example is the project, Strategic Development, which led to the report entitled, “Establishing, assessing and awarding pedagogical competence.”\(^81\)

The Government should create a national authority charged with supporting educational institutions in their efforts to draw up a pedagogy award system. Conferences and opportunities for the exchange of knowledge are examples of activities that can both facilitate the process and stimulate coordinated activities.

One student in an SFS reference group, who is studying at the master’s level and who is also a student representative, describes the following: “Those teachers who support the implementation of a system for the recognition of merit for competence in instruction often encounter a

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\(^80\) Ibid, pg. 18.
\(^81\) Ed. Ryegård, Å et al. (2010).
5. Research and development in higher education pedagogy

In order for students to receive an adequate education, it is necessary to have knowledge about the students themselves, their circumstances, study habits, results and career developments. Such knowledge can be gleaned primarily from research into higher-education pedagogy and from work with the development of university pedagogy. The difference between research work and development work is not precise, but the areas exist more on something along the lines of a sliding scale where research freely seeks after new knowledge whereas development is new-oriented and often has requirements in terms of being directly applicable to educational programmes. Financing for research is often sought from the Educational Sciences Committee of the Swedish Research Council. Tools and resources for the advancement of pedagogy are sought by teachers from their respective universities.

For the individual teacher, the development of pedagogy is often about making changes to pedagogy programming. A basic point of departure is that development work should be based on research into teaching and learning. The development of instruction and learning in universities requires both cross- and multi-scientific research efforts, as well as practical research.

5.1 Implement a national action programme within university pedagogy research

In 2012, the Educational Sciences Committee of the Swedish Research Council did not approve financing of any new projects within the area of higher education, despite an unusually high number of applications for higher education pedagogy research projects. According to head secretary Elisabeth Nihlfors, this was not due to the projects being insufficient in terms of quality; quite the contrary – it would have been possible to approve more projects if there had been enough available resources.

Such research proposals illustrate the role of the Educational Sciences Committee in promoting the research-based development of schools and preschools. Development of universities and other institutions of higher education sciences.

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82 SOU 2001:13 pg. 86.
83 As well, Formas and Riksbankens jubileumsfond are potential financiers.
84 That which distinguishes ongoing work with quality and the advancement of pedagogy is that the latter is financed with specific resources and results in a specific report.
85 Discussion with Elisabeth Nihlfors, head secretary of the Educational Sciences Committee of the Swedish Research Council.
education is not mentioned. The resources dedicated for educational science-related projects are also primarily dedicated to schools. Elementary and secondary-level schools do bear, however, the responsibility for the knowledge and skills of their students, who then go on to apply for admission to institutions of higher education, knowledge that can impact later university results. It would, however, be both an unfortunate and erroneous conclusion to assume that research as to how students learn and change within the university context is not needed. University students have an extremely high need to encounter research-based pedagogy. And the primary issue here is not that students’ prior knowledge from high school can be, in the worst-case scenario, inadequate. The primary concern here is that higher education pedagogy be adequately linked to student learning and that students attain the goals laid down in their respective curriculum.

In order for Sweden to be able to effectively compete in the international arena as a country offering learning and educational resources, all aspects of its educational offerings must be renewed – including goals, learning activities, exams and evaluations. International research can be inspiring, but knowledge that is based on the specific conditions/circumstances in Sweden is also necessary. Swedish circumstances are, in many regards, essentially distinct from those that apply at the international level. For example, in Sweden, each course is subject to separate assessment, rather than the entire programme, or course of study, which implies particular requirements in terms of collaboration amongst course coordinators who must not only coordinate their respective classes but also integrate them in order to form a coherent whole in compliance with set graduation requirements.

It is well known in higher-education circles that the level of university level education pedagogy is second-rate in Sweden. An illustrative quote has been gleaned from a research assessment compiled by Karlstadt University aimed at creating suggestions of areas in which Karlstadt University should advance their R&D initiatives. The authors of that assessment made the following comment, “Our assessment is that the relatively weak level of research and development in the area of higher-education level pedagogy in Sweden means that Karlstad should be able to reach the frontline of the national effort within a relatively short period of time [...]”

Clearly, a major national strategy aimed at the advancement of higher-education pedagogy research and development is needed in order to improve the university-level education received in this country. The government must therefore prepare specific and appropriate allocations to this end.

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86 Research and innovation (2012/13:30) pg. 153.
87 Renström, R and Schüllerqvist, B (2007) pg. 11.
5.2 Create a nationally-coordinated effort within the field of higher education pedagogy

The Rådet för högre utbildning/Council for the Renewal of Higher Education, during its period of activities, was tasked with supporting the advancement of pedagogy and the general renewal of institutions of higher education. The Council, enjoying an independent role within the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, was also tasked with increasing the status of engagements with higher education pedagogy issues and teaching methods in our universities. During the years 1999-2004, support was granted to 78 projects, totalling an amount approaching SEK 57 million. Additionally, the Council was responsible for disseminating knowledge of both international and Swedish research and experience with higher-education pedagogy. After this authority was retired at the end of 2005, the commission was moved to the Swedish Agency for Network and Cooperation in Higher Education (NSHU). Through the NSHU, inter alia, the project, “Strategic Development of Pedagogical Competence” was financed, which resulted in the report, Implementing, Assessing and Awarding Pedagogical Competence (2010). NSHU was then closed at the end of 2008. Presently, there is no central authority charged with the coordination and promotion of research and development in higher-education pedagogy.

The development of pedagogy is an area to which each institution of higher education has a specific responsibility. The need for assistance with coordination and the provision of other support to educational institutions, the issues that initially led to the creation of the Council for Higher Education, remain equally relevant today.

Advancement of higher education pedagogy that is necessary to improve the quality of education at Swedish institutions cannot happen in an isolated manner at individual institutions. It is therefore necessary to analyse the specific conditions at each school to define their work with higher-education pedagogy and to determine what significance the size of the institution plays in terms of the scope of such actions. For smaller universities or colleges, the greater challenge is to effectively follow the research emanating from larger institutions, and keeping updated through their research and development initiatives related to higher-education pedagogy. While it is important that each institution of higher education assumes responsibility for the promotion of higher education pedagogy, a national authority charged with providing support in the way of knowledge-based and project-based resources would support increased competence in higher-education pedagogy at all institutions throughout the country. Voluntary coordination among educational institutes is good, but is hampered by the fact that the participating institutions are increasingly becoming competitors therefore adding to the necessity of a national authority to lead the effort.

88 The National Agency for Higher Education was closed at the end of 2012.
90 Prop. 2001/02:15 pg. 89, et seq.
The reigning interest in issues related to higher-education pedagogy and the frustration at its low-level of prioritization has led to private initiatives and networking between researchers and others active within this field. Examples include Swednet and the Swedish Higher Education Research Network (SHERN).91 Since higher education pedagogy is not supported at the national level, the initiative of individuals has proven very important in terms of the advancement of higher education pedagogy. The scholarly e-magazine, Higher Education, was started in 2011 at the initiative of persons working within pedagogical development. The purpose of this publication is to provide a forum in which educators can publish articles detailing developments within their respective field of instruction. In this way, developments in education are made visible and subject to peer review much in the same way as research.92 Initiatives such as this one will prove significant in terms of the promotion of higher-education pedagogy. It is, however, a risky scenario in which an entire scholarly area is maintained by a group of private individuals, since this fails to ensure the degree of stability and standardization that would be offered by a national body. More and more educational institutions are realising the necessity of structures dedicated to supporting national-level works to promote higher-education pedagogy.93

There are compelling reasons for tasking a national authority with the coordination of higher education pedagogy issues. This authority should promote higher-education pedagogy research and development and have the authority to allocate resources that will help to implement the recommendations. Additional tasks of the national authority should includethe provision of support to forums for the exchange of research results, and supporting the exchange of experience-based knowledge between institutions, as related to the field of higher-education pedagogy.

5.3 Sweden should participate in the international higher education pedagogy arena

There is a considerably stronger engagement in higher-education pedagogy research internationally than presently in Sweden. Both of our Nordic neighbours, and all of the Anglo-Saxon countries, are far ahead of us in this regard.94 While Sweden has a great need to establish higher-education pedagogy as an area of research based on the specific conditions at Swedish educational institutions, knowledge of, and contacts within, international higher-education pedagogy research is important. This is important in an increasingly globalized society and introduces new perspectives and inspiration.

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91 See www.swednetwork.se, where one finds a description of SHERN.
92 See www.hogreutbildning.se This publication is presently supported by the ”US,” i.e. the six largest universities in Sweden, in the form of the possibility for collaborators to allocate time to the publication.
93 Bondestam, F (2010) pg. 29.
94 Göteborg University (2012).
During its period of activity, the Council for the Renewal of Higher Education had an international profile that reflected the aspiration of our national authorities. The Agency was charged with disseminating knowledge of new development initiatives both within Sweden and abroad. One part of that Agency’s activity that received particular notice was indeed the international coordination that it promoted, resulting in a great number of contacts between Swedish researchers and their colleagues abroad.

At present, there is no national authority responsible for monitoring both Swedish and international higher-education research. This is remarkable, not least of all in view of Sweden’s undertakings under the Bologna Process and that internationalization is generally a priority area for Sweden. Nor do we have a national authority to represent Sweden internationally at higher-education coordination bodies, venues, or conferences. The government should therefore charge a national authority with stimulating international cooperation between educational institutions, monitoring international research into higher-education pedagogy and representing Sweden abroad in various contexts related to higher-education pedagogy.

6. Concluding discussion

Summary and conclusions of this report.

6.1 The Swedish National Union of Students demands that the Government:

- develops a national strategy for the improvement of education at universities and other institutions of higher education. This strategy should incorporate a plan for the promotion of student-centred learning at learning institutions, in accordance with Sweden’s undertakings under the Bologna Process.

- undertakes a serious, concerted national research and development strategy for the improvement of higher education pedagogy. Specific funding should be created and organised as part of this proposal.

- incorporates into the Higher Education Ordinance the requirement that all university teachers complete at least 10 weeks of training in higher education pedagogy, and stipulate that these teachers are entitled to in-service higher education teacher training.

- broadens the scope of the requirements in the Anti-Discrimination Act so that pedagogy support in institutions of higher education is included.

96 HSV (2005) pg. 20.
• devises a national system for the assessment of quality, that takes into account the learning process and not just the results of learning.

• charges a national authority with the coordination of issues related to institutions of higher education, distribution of resources for research and development within higher education pedagogy, and promotion of the advancement of higher education pedagogy at educational institutions.

• charges a national authority with monitoring international developments in higher-education pedagogy research, the same which shall represent Sweden abroad in contexts related to higher education pedagogy.

• charges a national authority with the provision of support to educational institutions as they undertake the implementation of pedagogy merit-assessment systems.

• compensates for the stagnation in allocated resources that universities have suffered since the 1990's by allotting significantly-increased resources for the improvement of instruction.

6.2 The Swedish National Union of Students encourages institutions of higher education to:

• ensure that the education received at universities and institutions of higher education is based on a scientific approach to learning.

• follow the Association of Swedish Higher Education's (SUHF) guidelines according to which all teachers, including adjunct professors, must have completed at least ten weeks of training in university pedagogy.

• create local rules incorporating requirements that doctoral students actively offering instruction have completed at least five weeks of higher education pedagogy training. This requirement should also be incorporated into the guidelines of the SUHF.

• improve teachers’ knowledge of course evaluation methods as well as their importance with respect to the promotion of learning through training in higher education pedagogy, as well as in-service training.

• allocate specific time of teachers’ professional service for pedagogy research and advancement.
• decide on a definition incorporating specific criteria to define pedagogical competence.

• institute requirements on pedagogy portfolios in the context of the assessment of pedagogical competence and teaching skills.

• introduce a system to award pedagogical competence, having as its overarching goal the recognition of skills in pedagogy to the same extent as scholarly, or scientific merit.

• ensure that a pedagogical expert participates in the assessment of pedagogical competence.

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