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## Teacher Education in Social Science in Sweden in Historical and Comparative Perspectives

### Abstract

In this paper, we will examine teacher education in social science. In the Swedish context, teacher education is part of the university system, but teacher education in social science is differently organized than social science education for other students. Teacher education in social science today is also, as a result of the deregulation at all levels of the Swedish educational system in the 1990s, locally designed and there are significant differences between universities. The aim of this paper is twofold. The first aim is to explore the roots of the current situation in the history of teacher education in social science in Sweden from the mid 1900s and into the early 2000s. The other aim is to describe and discuss comparatively how this education is organized at different Swedish universities today. The analysis revolves around questions about disciplinarity, organization and teacher education as a “trading zone” between the traditional academic disciplinary organization of social science and the conceived needs of the school subject Civics.

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### Keywords

disciplinarity, trading zone, civics, teacher education, Swedish universities, Samhällskunskap

### 1. Introduction

Ever since the subject Civics was introduced in Swedish schools after World War II, the question of how its teachers should be educated has been debated. What does a teacher in Civics need to know? From the disciplinary landscape of social science at the universities, what should be included in teacher education for Civics? These questions are related to the academic organization of teacher education, with disciplinary social science meeting interdisciplinary needs, and with how social science knowledge should be introduced to pupils as members of community and society, as future skilled citizens, and as possible future social scientists (DeCesare 2007, 179).

In this article, we would like to discuss the organization of teacher education for Civics in relation to the social science disciplines at the universities. Consequently, we do not discuss didactics and practical training even though these are central areas of the teacher training programs. In contrast with other

school subjects like Mathematics, History or Physics, Civics has no directly corresponding discipline at the universities. Historically, this complex situation has been the focus of central guidelines in official regulatory texts. In the 1990s, though, higher education including teacher education was decentralized and re-regulated and since then courses and programs are locally designed. In 2001, new official guidelines stipulated that teacher education no longer necessarily had to follow disciplinary organizing principles (SOU 1999:63, 14). This led to different organizational solutions at different universities where teacher education for Civics is given. In this article, we will use both the historical texts regulating the organization in earlier decades and some local organizational solutions of today as they are presented in course websites as empirical material.

Although this article focuses exclusively on the relationship between teacher education and the academic social sciences, a brief initial comment on the school subject would nevertheless seem pertinent. As background, it should be mentioned that pupils in Swedish schools are exposed to social science in a school subject called Samhällskunskap. Although this subject does not translate into the English language in any obvious or straightforward way, we believe that the closest approximation would be Civics. From the sixth to the twelfth school year in Sweden, Civics includes perspectives from social sciences like Sociology, Political science, Social and economic geography, Economics and Law and has a special focus on questions about democracy and citizenship. Even though historical perspectives can be found, History is mainly treated in a separate school subject. Civics in Sweden can thus be defined as a school subject somewhat wider than in other national contexts, but at the same time narrower than for example “Social studies”, since disciplinary fields like History, Anthropology and Psychology are not included.



Our interest here, however, lies in aspects of interaction between teacher education and academic disciplines. The perspective that we apply is a constructionist view on knowledge, where we regard both school subjects and academic disciplines as constructed and not inherent or inevitable divisions of knowledge. We would regard them as stabilizing traditions, which in real life facilitate framing and influence how people understand the world around them. Messer-Davidow, Shumway & Sylvan (1993, vii–viii) have used the concept of “disciplinarity” in discussing how (academic) disciplines affect knowledge in many ways. Disciplines specify objects and research methods, give conceptions of breadth and depth and offer criteria for valuing what is good or bad research. Disciplines create distinctions between theory and practice, orthodoxy and heterodoxy, specialists and generalists. They regulate financing and markets of employment, they steer how knowledge is spread. And, not least, they produce and manage the idea of progress and tell stories of achievements and advances. Furthermore, Klein (2006) divides these traits of disciplinarity into two main categories. Firstly, disciplines maintain a functional differentiation that produces a specific worldview. Secondly, disciplines render a system of power that controls academic work inside disciplines.

Using Peter Galison’s terminology, teacher education could be called a “trading zone” (Galison 1997, 803), i.e. an area where close yet different cultures can meet and share some activities, while at the same time retaining that which makes them separate and specific. But what is traded in the zone, and why? With regard to different teaching traditions in the social sciences for example, scholars have observed that intentions may differ. Regarding Civics or Social studies curricula, the intention can be guided by at least three conceptualizations; studies can be seen as a vehicle for cultural or citizenship transmission, as the study of the social sciences, including history, or as reflective inquiry (Bragow 1996, 15). Against the backdrop of such observations, the disciplinarity/interdisciplinarity problem comes to the fore.

In this article, we adopt primarily an organizational approach while making the assumption that the ways in which Civics is organized and debated within a relevant set of institutions say something about disciplinarity and objectives. Higher education in Sweden is primarily an affair of state and, as increasingly observed in the literature, public institutions are subjected to a more or less constant cross-pressure from competing organizational principles (Christensen et.al. 2005). This cross-pressure, involving not only social, economic and political forces, actually concerns the models for how public institutions should organize their work and functions. A core assumption is that organizational membership and contextual framework affect how actors think about what they do (Chris-

tensen et.al. 2005, 10). Or, simply put, we assume that historical and present-day documents say something about how Civics is organized in higher education in Sweden. Organizing principles, in turn, say something about disciplinarity.

Scientific boundaries have gained a lot of scholarly interest (cf. Shapin 1992, Klein 1996, Gieryn 1999), also in the Swedish field of social science (cf. Larsson & Wisselgren 2006, Larsson 2008). When organization of knowledge production and distribution is studied, for example out of questions of disciplinarity/interdisciplinarity, most often focus is on research (Hedtke 2006), and educational areas investigated only to some extent.

In the field of social science, for example, thematic issues of *Current Sociology* (2008:2) and *The American Sociologist* (2007:2) focus on educational questions and *Journal of Social Science Education* 2006:2 has disciplinarity/interdisciplinarity as its central theme.

From this perspective, teacher education has not received much exclusive attention. This also corresponds with the general notion of teacher education as an “understudied” object (Adler 2004, 2). Studying teacher education specifically, which we do in this article, could contribute further aspects and highlights to the understanding of social science education.

The aim of this article is to discuss how Swedish teacher education in social science is designed by on the one hand exploring its history and on the other hand comparatively discuss how it is organized at a number of different Swedish universities today. At the centre of attention are questions about disciplinarity, organization, and teacher education as a “trading zone”.

## **2. Discipline and school subject: the perpetual problem of congruence**

Students aiming at a teacher career in secondary school level have throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century been trained via the study of different disciplines at the university. After World War II, Civics was introduced as a new school subject in its own right as a means to promote and uphold democratic society. At the same time the debate about which of the many different social science disciplines were indispensable for subject teacher education took off.

The debate had some precursors in the 1930s discussion about just what kind of disciplinary linkage was necessary for teachers in History, a school subject which in the final year in the old secondary school included government (Swe: historia med samhällslära). For example, a government commission in 1936 stated that studying History at the university alone would provide students for the teaching profession with insufficient knowledge in government. The commission suggested that students in teacher education for History should also take courses in the history and organization of Swedish political institutions, in Economic



history, and in Economics to make their knowledge more congruent with the demands of the school subject. After World War II, contemporary social, political, and economic aspects of the school subject were further strengthened through governmental regulation. Against this background, representatives from different university disciplines in the field of social science argued that their fields of study should generally be given more time and space in teacher education. A commission gathering the views and opinions from Swedish universities started working on this and related issues in 1945. Its recommendation (SFS 1953:610) was that the course requirements for teacher education for the subject History with government should include two semesters of History and one semester of either Political science or Economics on the university level (Brolin 1965, 214).

When Civics was made a separate school subject, new requirements upon teacher education ensued. To become a Civics teacher, a student had to take two semesters of Political science and one of Economics, or vice versa (Brolin 1965, 214). According to the 1953 governmental regulation, another three semesters of study in either the humanities or the social sciences had to be added to the core study of Political science and Economics, including also a separate course in Psychology and the theory and history of Pedagogy (unless Pedagogy was already part of the additional three-semester portfolio). It was also required that basic training in the university disciplines should be followed by a trial year of actual school teaching.

A government commission was appointed in 1960 to look at how teacher education in Sweden could be reformed to have better fit with the new system of compulsory and secondary schooling which was under way, a 9-year compulsory school (Swe: *grundskolan*) beginning at age 7, followed by an optional 2-4-year secondary school (Swe: *gymnasiet*). Commissioner Per-Erik Brolin was specifically tasked to investigate the relationship between the education of teachers in the university disciplines on the one hand, and on the other hand the experiences of new school teachers on the job, in schools. Brolin discovered that most new teachers in the field of Civics had insufficient training. He also concluded that Civics in the later stages of compulsory school had become significantly oriented toward and influenced by Sociology (Brolin 1965, 214–215). Since at the time Civics also involved labor market information and orientation, there was a widespread practice in which vocational guidance councilors performed most of the teaching. The social science knowledge among this group of teachers varied significantly in both scope and orientation (Rudvall 2001, 29).

Brolin also discussed the significant incongruence between the content of Civics as a school subject and the content of learning at university. He found that teachers who had studied two semesters of Political

science and one semester of Economics were best equipped to handle the school subject. The situation for this group was further improved after Political science at Swedish universities started to include courses in Political sociology and Law. Still, many aspects of Civics in compulsory school were missing from course work at the universities. Brolin listed the following areas as examples: school and studies, working life and the labor market, social psychology and social problems, recreation and leisure and children and youth issues (Brolin 1965, 215).

Regarding secondary school, congruence between school subject and university training was equally lacking. In secondary school and over and above Political science and Economics, Civics also involved such knowledge areas as population, economic life in foreign countries, and social, economic and political planning issues, i.e. most of which belong to the disciplines of Sociology and Social and economic geography on the university level. Brolin's conclusion was, however, that the problem of incongruence was indeed perpetual, i.e. lacking a clear and stable solution: "Since the subject which in school is called Civics corresponds with an array of disciplines at university, any teacher education which comprises no more than three or four semesters must by necessity be regarded as insufficient, regardless of how these semesters are combined." (Authors' translation, Brolin 1965, 215)

The idea that a Civics teacher in training should spend one or several semesters studying disciplines within the field of social science thus dominates the debate of the first two decades after World War II. The way questions were asked; the issue seemed to be defined as a matter of combining university semesters in a way as congruent as possible with the contents of the school subject Civics. Brolin's research and his conclusion that a perfect fit was impossible, however, was the forebear of a new direction for the debate in which the very idea that education students should study disciplines at university was put into question and new organizing principles for teacher education were tested.

### **3. Moving beyond disciplinary studies?**

Against the backdrop of the Brolin inquiry, the commission eventually suggested that teacher education should be considered in its own right and distinguished teacher education for the later years of compulsory school from that for secondary school on the other. The main innovation was to stop thinking in terms of students in teacher education taking full semesters in various disciplines. Instead, their studies would be organized as shorter courses combined in accordance with a government regulated format.

*Teacher education programs as suggested in SOU 1965:25*

For future teachers in later-stage compulsory school (2 semesters):



- Descriptive social knowledge (4 weeks)
- Sociology, Social psychology and Cultural anthropology (5 weeks)
- Swedish and foreign political science (12 weeks)
- Mass media and public opinion (3 weeks)
- National economics (11 weeks)
- Labor market orientation (2 weeks)
- Teaching methods

For future teachers in secondary school (3 semesters):

- Cartography (3 weeks)
- Geography (6 weeks)
- Population and economic geography (10 weeks)
- Regional geography (6 weeks)
- Construction and social planning (4 weeks)
- National economics (8 weeks)
- Political science (8 weeks)
- Independent study in either field of Geography, Economics, or Political science (15 weeks)
- Teaching methods

As suggested by the Commission, the new line of thinking was to allow the content of the school subject to direct the content of teacher education at university in a new and different way. The Minister of Education, Ragnar Edenman, made it perfectly clear, however, that he was not ready for such innovation but rather preferred to initiate a new inquiry into the matter. As concerns the issue of congruence, nevertheless, Edenman saw reason in the notion that the content of teacher education somehow had to be adapted to the plans and regulations of Swedish schools. However, he stated, "This does not have to mean that full congruence must prevail between the matter that is learned and the matter which is later to be taught. In teacher education, the emphasis should be on core theories and problematizations." (Proposition 1967:4, 132–133)

The old system for teacher education, comprising six full semesters, prevailed. Notwithstanding, Edenman looked to a different opportunity for reform with the intent to improve content without having to significantly reform the Swedish system of higher education. At the time, it was common for students for the teaching profession to take one or two semesters of study which did not correspond with any of their projected school subjects. Edenman imagined that a change in the steering documents, which would make all six semesters count toward eligibility, might help to achieve his goal. The minister also saw a major benefit emanating from this essentially conservative stance on the issue in that a disciplinary core curriculum would furnish other university students with the opportunity to change their lines of study. He assumed that a number of students would then choose the career of school teachers at a late stage in their university studies, which would provide for better recruitment for the school sector as a whole. In the same government bill, it was added that the separation of compulsory school and secondary school in

the teacher education curriculum, which had been suggested, seemed unwise due to the risk of increasing cost and a narrowing of the recruitment base. The final decision was that teacher education should continue to build up the same competences among students for both school levels. However and from 1969 on, teachers in secondary school were mostly hired on the basis of having studied at least three semesters in one university discipline while the demands on their counterparts in compulsory school were put somewhat lower. (SOU 1978:86, 52)

#### **4. Changes in teacher education**

By the end of the 1960s, although disciplinarity was adhered to as the organizing principle, changes began to emerge in subject teacher education in Sweden. Up until this time, students normally spent a year doing salaried on-site training in school after finishing their ordinary six semesters of university studies. The on-site training year was discarded and substituted for a year of study at a teacher education college including reduced non-salaried on-site training. Furthermore, an early introduction to pedagogical issues was introduced parallel with the disciplinary studies. In the 1968 reform, beside Pedagogy, Teaching methodology was also added to the curriculum as a disciplinary study in its own right. (Morberg 1999).

In 1974, another governmental commission started scrutinizing teacher education in Sweden and in 1980 new steering documents for compulsory school were adopted. Both works provided impetus for further reform and in 1988 new principles for education of teachers for compulsory school were introduced. Two branches were stipulated, one aimed at years 1-7 and the other at years 4-9. Teachers in the later stages of compulsory school were now expected to take responsibility for four subjects at their school, as compared with three subjects before. As the new 'teacher program for compulsory school' was introduced, students who wanted to become teachers in the later stages of compulsory school no longer studied together with those aiming for secondary school. Only four years later, however, this reform was partly rescinded as the opportunity for students with a disciplinary background to choose to work as compulsory school teachers was reintroduced. In parallel, education of teachers for secondary school was reformed, basically prolonging the period of study for teachers-to-be. Between 1968 and 2001, subject teacher education also comprised one year of practical pedagogical training. At first, this year was added on at the end of the study program, but over time courses were divided up and gradually introduced at earlier stages and in between the disciplinary studies.

To conclude, in the period between the late 1940s and the Millennium, students interested in becoming Civics teachers would choose rather freely between the





social science disciplines available at Swedish universities. In 2001, however, this was radically changed.

### 5. Civics instead of disciplines

Against the backdrop of social, economic, and political change, a major overhaul of teacher education in Sweden was introduced in a government bill (Proposition 1999/2000:135). The political process by which public institutions in Sweden gradually shifted over to steering by objectives in the last two decades of the 1900s was a significant factor of overall change. (Eklund 2008, 115–136) The program for teacher education which ensued is the one currently (2008) valid in the Swedish system of higher education.<sup>1</sup> It leads to a shared degree for all categories of school teachers. Three semesters of the program are devoted to common teacher knowledge shared by all student categories. The rest of the program consists of studies in different fields of knowledge for the specific teacher categories. For students studying to become Civics teachers, today three semesters of disciplinary studies are needed for teaching in the later stages of compulsory school, while those aiming at secondary school need to take four. A significant change to the system, however, is that each university can shape and form the curriculum for the teacher program autonomously as long as they stay within the framework set by national goals.

The government commission which preceded this latest reform discussed the issue of disciplines and subject boundaries:

The committee holds that each establishment for higher education should, starting from the goals set out for the teacher degree, perform an analysis of how the term subject should be interpreted and, above all, what the content of subject studies should be. For example, studies in a subject can be organized according to overarching, multi-disciplinary, or thematic principles. This, according to the Committee (Lärarutbildningskommittén), entails *a widened concept of subject in teacher education.*" (SOU 1999:63, 14)

The way this was formulated gave an opening for Swedish universities to reorganize teacher education, not least in the field of social science. The problems of congruence which had found their expression in the 1960s, indeed some of them already in the 1930s as mentioned above, were still visible by the Millennium. Therefore, given this new opportunity, many Swedish universities attacked the problem in new and different ways, mainly by leaving the historical path of disciplinary studies and by introducing Civics as a new discipline in its own right. These efforts are re-

flective of the thoughts and ambitions in the 1960s, which were discussed but never implemented. The idea that subject studies for education students could be achieved by multi-disciplinary integration on the university level received new impetus.

The 2001 reform of teacher education in Sweden thus made it possible to reorganize curricula based on local perceptions and initiatives. Above all, it gave way for initiatives independent of disciplinarity. The congruence problem, it seemed, was about to be solved. Unfortunately and despite the good intentions of reformers, the problem not only persists but has to some degree been aggravated by Sweden's continuing move toward steering by objectives on the one hand and seemingly inexorable decentralization on the other. (Jarl, Kjellgren & Quennerstedt 2007, 35–44) Currently, so much of what Civics is and can be is decided autonomously, not only at different universities but also at different compulsory and secondary schools.

In historical as well as contemporary light, it is obvious that education of teachers for Civics is a "trading zone" (Galison 1997, 803) where the school subject Civics meets the academic social science disciplines. This meeting raises several vexing questions and issues, and places a potential Civics discipline in an intermediate position between established university disciplines and the school subject as defined by national steering documents. As pointed out by Star & Griesemer (1989, 508), objects traded in the zone might have completely different meanings for the actors involved. Against this background there is all the more reason to study the (content and) organizing principles for Civics as they currently emerge at different Swedish universities.

### 6. Organizing Civics: Swedish universities compared

The higher education institutions in Sweden enjoy significant degrees of freedom in planning their activities, allocating resources, and organizing study programs.<sup>2</sup> The legal framework concerning higher education stipulates that the majority of Swedish universities and university colleges are state-run, thus subject to legal and budgetary steering by the government (the Ministry for Education and Research) and parliament. Governmental and parliamentary decision making with regard to universities and other higher education institutions are for the most part taken on the basis of recurrent evaluations by one or several of the higher education agencies, mainly the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (Swe: Högskoleverket) or the Swedish Research Council (Swe: Vetenskapsrådet). To make a long story short, the state governs the uni-

1 At the time of this writing, teacher education in Sweden is once again up for reform (SOU 2008:109) and changes to the system can be expected in the near future.

2 A general introduction to the Swedish system of higher education can be obtained at <http://www.hsv.se/highereducation>.



versities in Sweden mostly through recurrent evaluations and budgetary steering.

In the perspective of this paper, however, the most interesting systemic aspect is the total lack of organizing principles for Swedish universities. In purely organizational terms, universities decide autonomously how to organize teaching, research, and administration. In effect, administration is the only exception, but then only to the extent that each university is required to have a board of governors, mainly appointed by the government, a vice-chancellor (Swe: rektor), and a Pro-Vice Chancellor (Swe: prorektor), the latter two also appointed by the government on recommendation from the board of governors. This means that any kind of principle e.g. tradition, competition, functional or economic need, may apply to how a university organizes its production and maintenance of knowledge in Sweden.

It is therefore perhaps not surprising that the 2001 reform gave rise to a plethora of ways in which to organize Civics for teacher education. Among the more than 15 universities that offer Civics teacher education, some chose not to respond to the new challenge by simply allowing students to continue doing disciplinary studies in Sociology, Economics, Political science, and a few others of the social sciences. Some chose to respond immediately by organizing Civics for teacher education, as a university discipline in its own right, thus at the same time attempting to solve the problems of congruence, disciplinarity, and organization as outlined in the above.

In an effort to explore how disciplinarity is mirrored in the way different Swedish universities currently organize Civics for teacher education, we have adopted a simple approach. Since all Swedish universities and other institutions for higher education openly present their curricula and courses on the internet, the information is readily available. We have chosen to focus upon three specific universities, namely the universities of Umeå, Göteborg, and Uppsala. Again, the aim is not to find an empirical material which is representative of Civics in Sweden, but rather to find and explore different representations of how disciplinarity is defined and traded against the background of the 2001 educational reform. There are a number of similarities and differences between Swedish universities, both in the way teacher education is organized, which courses students have to take and, which is of particular interest here, in how disciplinarity is represented in the curricula. The choice of three Swedish universities here, however, is made on the basis of difference. The total picture of Civics at the university level in Sweden remains to be researched. For the purposes of this paper we adopt an approach in which most-different organizational approaches come to the fore.

It should also be noted that focus is upon Civics for students aiming at jobs in secondary school or in the later years (7-9) of compulsory school. Students aiming for the earlier stages of school in Sweden face other requirements which do not enter into the analysis here.

### 6.1 Civics for teachers at Umeå university<sup>3</sup>

| Semester        | Level          | Courses  | Departments   |
|-----------------|----------------|--|---|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | I. (30 ECTS)   | * The foundations of national public economy (15 ECTS)<br>* Democracy and society (15 ECTS)  | Economics, Economic history, Political science, Historical, philosophical & religious studies, Didactics                                |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | I. (30 ECTS)   | * Social items (15 ECTS)<br>* School-based teaching and learning (15 ECTS)   | Sociology, Historical, philosophical & religious studies, Didactics   |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | II. (30 ECTS)  | * International economy (7,5 ECTS)<br>* Diversity, globalization and democracy (7,5 ECTS)<br>* Current international issues in a didactic perspective (7,5 ECTS)<br>* Population, migration and ethnicity (7,5 ECTS) | Economics, Economic history, Political science, Historical, philosophical & religious studies, Social and economic geography, Didactics |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> | III. (30 ECTS) | * Theories and models of social sciences (7,5 ECTS)<br>* Methods of social sciences (7,5 ECTS)<br>* Independent study (15 ECTS)  | Economic history, Social and economic geography, Historical, philosophical & religious studies, Economics, Political science, Didactics |

3 Full text available at <http://kursplaner.educ.umu.se/kursplaner>.



At Umeå university, Civics is offered for four full semesters. Courses are organized around certain core perspectives based on the three societal spheres. During the first semester students are introduced to economic perspectives followed by political perspectives. Second-semester studies begin with a focus upon social perspectives, and the last part of first-year studies comprises school-based learning and teaching practices. At Umeå, a second full year of Civics is also offered. The third semester is divided up on four sections, also thematic in their approach, but increasingly focused upon international and global aspects of society, knowledge, and analysis. The fourth semester begins with two separate courses, one in social science theory and the other in methodological practices. This semester, bringing the students around to a full two-year cycle, finishes off with an independent study which is designed and penned by students individually under the supervision of staff from all of the involved disciplines.

In the Umeå case, the intention seems to be to move beyond disciplinarity in Civics by means of thematic organization. First of all, the different disciplines are, with minor exceptions, involved on all course levels. Secondly, the responsibility for the thematic course content is shared between disciplines, gravitating toward economic (Economics and Economic history), political (Political science and History of ideas) and social (Sociology and History of ideas) perspectives. Didactics, thirdly, is involved in the course work across all subject courses and, at the end of the first year, as responsible for the application of acquired knowledge in school-based teaching and learning. Of course, it is impossible to gauge just to what extent this cross-dis-

ciplinary, thematic approach is conducive to Civics as something more than the sum of its parts from organizational principles alone. The intention, nevertheless, seems clear and produces a situation in which staff from the different disciplines must work together in delineating each thematic course.

The thematic approach returns in the third semester studies, only with shorter courses aimed at international and global perspectives. Economics and Economic history in the first course, and Political science and History of ideas in the second, are joined together in this effort as well. The difference here is that Social and economic geography joins in with its own theme (Population, migration, and ethnicity). Again, however, the semester ends with Didactics following up on thematic studies. From the organizational chart, it could be argued that Social and economic geography is lacking in integration whereas the other disciplines involved continue their thematic approach. In a similar vein, it can be observed that Sociology disappears.

The fourth full semester of Civics for students in teacher education follows up on both the multi-disciplinary principle and the thematic approach. Theories, models, traditions, and methods in social science analysis are taught jointly by staff from different social science disciplines at Umeå. Although Sociology is still out, Social and economic geography returns to give its contribution during this semester. The final, independent study, in which students are expected to apply concepts, ideas and methods chosen freely from the different fields of social science (at which point purely didactic approaches are also allowed) is characterized by the same cross-disciplinary intention as during the foregoing three semesters.



## 6.2 Civics for teachers at Göteborg university<sup>4</sup>

| Semester        | Level          | Courses  | Departments  |
|-----------------|----------------|--|--|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | I. (30 ECTS)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Ideas about society (7,5 ECTS)</li> <li>* Images of society (4,5 ECTS) including school-based teaching and learning (3 ECTS)</li> <li>* The Swedish political system in a comparative perspective (6 ECTS) including school-based teaching and learning (1,5 ECTS)</li> <li>* Economics (6 ECTS) including school-based teaching and learning (1,5 ECTS)</li> </ul> | Political science, Economics, Journalism, Sociology, Pedagogy                    |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | II. (30 ECTS)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Individual and society (7,5 ECTS)</li> <li>* School-based teaching and learning (7,5 ECTS)</li> <li>* Institutions and welfare in Europe (7,5 ECTS)</li> <li>* Comparative perspectives on European regions (6 ECTS) including School-based teaching and learning (1,5 ECTS)</li> </ul>   | Political science, Economics, Social and economic geography, Sociology, Pedagogy |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | III. (30 ECTS) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Individual, group and culture (15 ECTS)</li> <li>* Global development and human rights (15 ECTS)</li> </ul>   | Political science, Sociology, Global studies                                     |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> | IV. (30 ECTS)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Methods of social science (15 ECTS)</li> <li>* Independent study (15 ECTS)</li> </ul>   | Political science  |

Looking at Civics for teachers at Göteborg university, separate courses in Civics are also offered for a total of four semesters. The approach is mainly thematic in the way courses are labeled and organized. Not visible in the illustration above are four overarching themes for the first two semesters, which tie the 7,5 ECTS blocs together in bigger 15 ECTS units. Accordingly, the first two courses in the first semester belong to a bloc called Ideas and public opinion, and the third and fourth courses to a bloc called Society and economy. Similarly, during their second semester studies, students at Göteborg take the first two courses as a bloc which is labeled Society and individual and the third and fourth courses as part of the bloc Europe in comparative perspective. As far as can be gathered from course descriptions, this indicates that the university sees the separate courses within each bloc as interlinked and signals a thematic line of thinking about the course content. More interesting to the perspective of this article, however, is that the students do not go through any course examination on the level of thematic blocs. Course examinations are carried out on the level of 7,5 ECTS courses, which makes possible closer correspondence between

the individual participating department on the one hand and the subject matter of individual course and course examination on the other.

An organizational logic behind the four blocs covering the first two semesters of study is possibly the integration of School-based teaching and learning with regular course work. It is noteworthy that on-site training is interspersed throughout the whole first year of studies. A full course (7,5 ECTS) devoted fully to school-based training and study appears during the second semester, but already during the first semester of Civics three of the courses involve contacts with and work related to real school environments.

Regardless of the way in which four overarching themes are subdivided by shorter course examinations, the thematic approach is explicit at Göteborg, seemingly the expression of an intention to move beyond disciplinarity. During their whole first year of studies, the students are confronted with teams of teaching staff from six different social science departments, including Journalism which for all intents and purposes seems to represent a significant step away from traditional disciplinarity. Teaching staff from different departments and with different disciplinary backgrounds and training are brought together to give thematically oriented courses.

<sup>4</sup> Full text available at <http://www.ufl.gu.se/utbildning/lararprogrammet/inriktningar>.





Thematic organization continues into the third and fourth semester studies at Göteborg. During the third semester, courses are also examined in 15 ECTS blocs, which seem to follow up on a particular core thematic centered on the individual and various social processes, organizations and phenomena. It is particularly interesting that the department of Global studies contributes with a course dedicated to globalization and human rights, because during the third and fourth semester studies the courses seem increasingly to become an affair for Sociology and Political science alone. In effect, during the fourth semester

which comprises studies in methodological issues and the designing and drafting of an independent study, Political science becomes the only remaining department involved in the program for the full semester.

The full cycle of Civics at Göteborg university thus seems to represent thematic thinking about Civics. It is noteworthy however that the last semester of studies, although the responsibility for the course rests with Political science alone, is nevertheless labeled with the generic terms Methods of social science and Independent study.

### 6.3 Civics for teachers at Uppsala university<sup>5</sup>

| Semester        | Level          | Courses  | Departments                                   |
|-----------------|----------------|--|---|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | I. (30 ECTS)   | * Political science (15 ECTS)<br>* Sociology (15 ECTS)   | Political science, Sociology                  |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | II. (30 ECTS)  | * Economics (15 ECTS)<br>* Social and economic geography (7,5 ECTS)<br>* School-based teaching and learning (7,5 ECTS) | Economics, Social and economic geography      |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | III. (30 ECTS) | * Political science OR<br>* Sociology OR<br>* Economics (22,5 ECTS)<br>* School-based teaching and learning (7,5 ECTS) | Political science, or Sociology, or Economics |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> | IV. (30 ECTS)  | * Political science OR<br>* Sociology (30 ECTS)  | Political science or Sociology                |

At Uppsala university, Civics for teachers shows few signs of any effort at moving beyond disciplinarity. In effect, from the way Civics is organized during four full semesters of study, it would be possible to draw the opposite conclusion. The first semester offers introductory courses, each for 15 ECTS, in Political science and Sociology. After the first half of second semester, the students will also have covered an introductory course in Economics, thus spending the best part of their first year studies on three of the historically well-entrenched core disciplines of Civics. The latter half of second semester is split between Social and economic geography, which is another classic in the field, and School-based teaching and learning. Social and economic geography does not return after second semester, however, and with the exception of this particular course and a total of two 7,5 ECTS courses in School-based teaching and learning, Civics at Uppsala for students in teacher education seems to be a matter of choice between Political Science, Sociology, and Economics.

Disciplinarity is clearly expressed both in the way courses are organized and with regard to the academic departments involved in teaching. Moving on to third semester studies, the students have the option to specialize by further studies in either Political science, Sociology, or Economics. There are no traces of thematic thinking or other forms of cross-disciplinary thinking involved in the curriculum. As a point of interest, the full-text presentation of courses for teachers at Uppsala also says that the students will receive instruction alongside students taking regular courses at the departments involved.

Economics then disappears as an option for the fourth semester, during which the students at Uppsala are expected to do either of two things. They can either specialize further by crowning their Civics curriculum with an advanced class in Political science or Sociology. This entails further training and specialization in those theoretical and methodological approaches typical for either discipline at Uppsala. If, for example, a student has chosen to specialize in Sociology (22,5 ECTS) during the third semester studies, one option for the fourth semester is to follow the ad-

5 Full text available at <http://www.selma.uu.se/publik>.



vanced class in Sociology (including an independent study *in Sociology*) during the whole of his or her last semester of Civics. The other option is to choose a broader approach and, again for example with a third semester specialization in Sociology, opt for an intermediate level course in Political science during the fourth semester, thus broadening the knowledge base but missing out on the methodological and independent study training of the advanced level Sociology. A similar example could be given for a student specializing in Political science, the important point being that regardless of whether the student at Uppsala chooses deepening or widening as a strategy, the higher study of Civics essentially becomes an affair of choosing between Political science and Sociology.

### 7. Concluding remarks

Developing Civics as a discipline creates an opportunity to find new inroads to organizing the “trading zone”, i.e. the meeting and exchange between different cultures of disciplinary social science on the one hand and school subject on the other. In a model where Civics teacher education is placed in between the social science disciplines and the school subject, the establishment of a separate Civics discipline moves teacher education from an organizational affinity with academic disciplinary toward the school subject, at least more so than was possible in the earlier, disciplinary-based education format. Keeping in mind that, in Sweden, the relevant public relations have generally become more diversified, local governance and designs at universities and schools might still receive a push from the new discipline of Civics in achieving better fit between teacher education and the needs of the school subject.

Students in Civics might be able to develop and elaborate more general knowledge in the field of social science. In this light too, multi-disciplinarity might be supplemented by inter-disciplinarity in regard to perspectives, concepts, theories, and methods. Such possibilities are also hinted at by recent inter- and multi-disciplinary educational research, which reflects the idea that a crossing of disciplinary boundaries is one key to development of new knowledge and to new ways of thinking (cf. Klein 2005).

Another potential benefit is that a discipline of Civics could offer a base for research in social science teaching. History teaching, mathematics teaching, science teaching are all distinct fields of study, currently much more elaborated than the study of social science teaching. One plausible reason for this state of affairs seems to be structural, something which becomes obvious at least from comparisons of different subject areas in Sweden. Civics teaching is seldom included in the interests of the social science disciplines (cf. Späte 2006).

Comparing the organization of Civics for students in teacher education between three Swedish universities, it is also difficult to talk about a new discipline emerging. To the contrary, all three universities seem to have followed ideas and logics of their own. The most striking find is Civics at Uppsala university, the organization of which mirrors outright disciplinary. With the exception of separate courses in Social and economic geography and School-based teaching and learning, Civics is a matter of basic and/or advanced studies in Sociology, Political science, or Economics in the Uppsala case. The Uppsala approach mirrors a conception of Civics as multidisciplinary within the boundaries of core disciplines.

If the Uppsala organization of Civics is compared with those of Göteborg and Umeå, the evidence of multi- and inter-disciplinary thinking is more readily available in the two other cases. Göteborg has a course structure which confronts the students with more disciplines. Particularly during the first year of studies, the different disciplines are also mingled under themes and course headings which seem to invite multi-disciplinary approaches and mixed conceptual work in the sense-making processes. Themes seem to follow the students at least through to the fourth semester, during which it is nevertheless questionable to what extent methodological and conceptual issues generated during the first three semesters can be adequately addressed in a final course based on Political science.

In the brief and explorative comparison<sup>6</sup> here, Umeå university seems to have followed through most consequently in its multi-disciplinary organization. There are more disciplines involved in the courses than in the other two cases. Also, students undergo course examinations based on thematic, multi-disciplinary courses (the only exceptions being Geography and Didactics during third semester) all through the Civics program, including the fourth semester social science theories, methods, and the final independent study. To conclude the comparison, we might add that organizational principles alone fall short of telling us what it is that the students actually meet in the classrooms. Yet, to the extent that organizing principles serve as guidelines for what teachers and students expect from their courses, and thereby affect what they do at university, we may conclude that the opportunity to create a new discipline called Civics at Swedish universities has preserved the old in some places while bringing something new in others.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that we have not researched how the organizing principles affect the strategies and choices of individual university teachers other than at Umeå university. That analysis falls outside the boundaries of this article, but is a theme we hope to return to at a later stage.



But the creation of a brand new Civics discipline does not inherently or necessarily solve the old problems related to congruence and content. As our examples show, there is movement and transformation of social science knowledge between disciplines. The relationship between teacher education and school subject, furthermore, is a complex issue which can also be handled in many different ways. To be sure, there are transformation problems also in other teaching fields, that is, where a school subject seems more congruent with a particular university discipline. A discipline of Civics, however, entails an additional organizational level between the traditional disciplines and the school subject, which in itself might render new problems and create new boundaries to overcome.

There are obvious problems with leaving a traditional curriculum based on disciplines. Disciplines offer established paths, for example concerning research communication, economic incentive, and signals pertaining to personal scientific careers (Hedtke 2006, Messer-Davidow, Shumway & Sylvan 1993). Within the boundaries of a discipline, it is generally accepted and widespread what is meant by having deep knowledge in some area. In other words, disciplines handle the tricky relationship between depth and scope of knowledge. Although opinions about what these relationships are and should be undergo more or less continuous change, disciplines are similar to institutions in having both integrating effects and giving rise to inertia.

When contrasting a new discipline with established ones, there is a risk of overstating the unity and continuity of traditional academic disciplines. Inherent diversities and conflicts might be hidden. Regarding the history of social science, the period from 1850 to 1945 saw the establishment of a limited number of disciplines that subsequently were institutionalized by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the period after that, those disciplinary boundaries have been continuously criticized and subjected to various efforts at creating

bridges across them. In this process, many new “interdisciplinary” fields have originated and established themselves as disciplines in the postwar era (Klein 2005, Gulbenkian Commission 1996, Smith 1997). For all this academic turmoil, the old disciplinaries seem remarkably resilient.

Studies in history of science or sociology of science show that new disciplines emerge in different ways. One point of origin is the discovery of a new object of study, and the ensuing exploration and delineation. Another is the perception of shortcomings in existing disciplines. Specialization, or the adaptation of new methods and theories, might also be conducive to the formation of new disciplines, as might the conceived need to analyze a phenomenon by using methods or perspectives from several different disciplines. In most disciplinary building processes debates about boundaries play important rhetorical and legitimizing roles (Larsson 2001, Gieryn 1999, Klein 1996).

In this light, Civics for higher education in Sweden has certain characteristics which might work against the ambition to create a new discipline. Civics is not the obvious result of new methods or any discovery of new study objects. Nor is it the result of a specialization process. Rather, it is the need for overview coupled with a need for generalizing knowledge that lies behind the initiative. Civics also has a most conspicuous condition: the existence of a school subject and the need to educate teachers for this. In the future, nevertheless, evolving disciplines might follow completely different paths than those shown by history. In today’s society, where information is indefinitely available, maybe disciplines just like Civics are needed? That is, disciplines where overview and knowledge about multiple concepts and perspectives are the distinguishing features. On that same note, it is reasonable to assume that what counts for disciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking today is something else tomorrow.

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