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Peace Education and Preparedness for the Future: narrations in textbooks and booklets in the Swedish Schools in the 1980s

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Abstract

In this paper we want to discuss peace education and preparedness for the future in the Swedish schools during the 1980s. This is a part of a wider research application with a longer time perspective from the 1880s to 2000. Our aims are two-folded. On one hand we want to study how different participants worked together with regard to implementing peace education in schools. On the other hand, this paper will focus on what picture of the future these sources visualize and how the schools are supposed to handling questions of war and peace and the fear of young people. The content of the history subject is of special interest.

In this paper we want to discuss peace education and preparedness for the future in Swedish schools during the 1980s. Our focus is on history textbooks for compulsory schools and booklets published by organizations outside the school system, such as Alva and Gunnar Foundation, the Red Cross and the Swedish branch of the United Nation.

Since the 1950s UNESCO has, in the framework of UN, been a central actor in the fields of education, science and culture to promote international understanding and respect regarding human rights. An important decree concerning education and international education were elaborated by UNESCO in 1974. During the following years some conferences were held where education on human rights (1978) and disarmament (1980) were central issues and had great impact on the development of peace education in Swedish schools. This is obvious in publications by the Swedish National Board of Education published in the middle of the 1980s, and different Projects on Peace and Preparedness for the Future located to Teachers Education in Malmö, from 1979 and onwards. However, the school does not exist in a vacuum. As the school has the commission to form new subjects it is an arena which a lot of actors and non-governmental organizations want to influence.

Both '*fredsfostran*' (peace fostering) and peace education include areas central to the curricula such as questions of future, fear and hope, values, democracy, knowledge and agency. How were these thoughts expressed in textbooks and in booklets? What representation of peace and war were used? In which narratives of society were those new peaceful subjects to be incorporated? The content of the history subject is of special interest, in the meaning of how history is written into narratives with a focus on future expectations and hopes. It is also our aim to study how the booklets and books refer to the possibilities of children and youths to change the future direction. What kind of subjects were the peace education supposed to form?

A search for a Swedish image in history textbooks for compulsory school – a study in progress

American Historians have used textbooks as sources to interpret changing discourses within the American society in a very interesting way. Joseph Moreau writes: 'Examining textbooks through the lens of the 'nation' is an effective way to unmask these conflicts.' (Moreau, 2003, p 18) Both Moreau (2003) and Zimmerman (2002) have pointed out periods of transitions in American textbooks in the 1890-, 1920-, 1930-, 1960- and 1980. We will focus on Swedish textbooks from the fifties up to the early nineties. 'Nation' is a key concept in this interpretation of the textbooks and hope, fear and expectations for the future are emotions close linked to 'the horizon of the future'.

Inspired by Koselleck (1985), Johansson, (2001), Jensen (2003) and Rösen (2004) our purpose is to analyse how the narrative of the Swedish neutrality and peace efforts has been told through textbooks since the nineteen fifties. It could be understood as a narrative of how non-alignment policy and peace becomes a part of larger narratives with strong symbolism about the modernization of Swedish society.

The image of a peaceful Swedish nation built on a policy of non-alignment becomes an important building block, giving us a framework for our interpretation and understanding of the process of modernization.

Under the headline 'Our international cooperation' young Swedes in the mid nineteen fifties were informed about Swedish peace efforts. The textbook - *History and society* – refers to the long peaceful Swedish tradition and how Sweden successfully have managed to stay out of two World Wars, as the country decided to stay neutral. Although Sweden was prepared to defend itself with arms, if the country was under attack or threatened. On the other hand has Sweden as a country been active in its work to shape cooperation with its Nordic neighbours and in establishing the Nordic council in 1952. Another example of Swedish peace efforts was the successful work to strengthen the United Nations after its foundation in 1945. An outcome of those efforts was the election of a Swedish diplomat, Dag Hammarskjöld, as the General Secretary of the organization in 1953. The textbook ends by stressing: 'As other countries Sweden has to take its responsibility and task to both take and give in the big community of all nations of the world.' (Tham et al 1955, p 176).

The narrative of governments as actors is obvious and includes a discourse of a peaceful country which has stayed neutral in conflicts and ready to defend the neutrality, also engaged in the foundation of the United Nations and rewarded by the world community for its efforts by the election of Dag Hammarskjöld as General Secretary of the UN.

In the early sixties a history textbook connects Swedish peace efforts with the technological revolution in a chapter named 'On the doorsteps to the Atomic Age' with text illustrated by a drawing of Dag Hammarskjöld. The technological revolution and the cold war have resulted in a divided world. But the progress has also created possibilities to conquer diseases and poverty. Despite the bitter contradictions in world politics the dream where all people unite in the defence of the peace, is still alive and materialized in the United Nations (Hultman & Sylvan, 1960).

Even if Sweden has a focus on the Nordic cooperation, peace politics are decided on a much larger arena than Sweden or Europe. Some years later a Swedish textbook from 1966, *History for Compulsory school*, gives a brief historical summary of peace efforts from the Napoleon wars up to today. In purpose to maintain peace, the Holy Alliance was established after the Napoleon wars. The Alliance was followed by the NF after the WWI and later on by the United Nations. Through its different organizations the UN has defended the peace in several conflicts all over the world. Inside Europe different organizations for developing trade and cooperation has been established. In effort to alleviate suffering and starvation as a result of the wars the Red Cross was founded by Henri Dunant (Björklom et al 1966). In a history book a year later the authors ask if the UN Declaration of Human Rights couldn't be a bridge between East and West in the ongoing Cold War. They connect the Declaration with the struggle against colonialism and apartheid in the Third World, the civil rights movement in the United States of America and women's liberation (Ander & Rudvall, 1967). Focus on the actor has changed from the Swedish authorities in the fifties to International organisations like the United Nations in the late sixties.

In the early seventies the authors, Hildingson and Husén, continues with a focus on the United Nations and its struggle against poverty, disease, illiteracy and over population (1970, 1974). If the students want to know more about the UN they are encouraged to pick up a sister textbook in civic education. Nine years later the same authors underline the UN Environmental conference in Stockholm 1972 and its motto: 'Only one earth'. Not until we have one world also including the Third world acting on the same conditions of a fair world order progress and peace can be established (Hildingson & Husén, 1979). In a textbook for use in college a similar map is drawn (Häger 1979). During the end of the seventies the people and former colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America step forward as actors also necessary to include. A fair world order, not European, built on a democratic peace turns UN into a room for conferences instead of an armed force between superpowers in Europe and North America.

Six years later, in the mid eighties, the same author stresses the importance of the UN in a world divided by the Cold War. Dag Hammarskjöld is representing the nation when he is visualized in a photo and mentioned by nationality in the text. The success of the liberation movements is an important part of a successful peace process. Further on in the textbook the grass roots movements are given a text of its own and there is also for the first time a photo of the peace movement in action. The reader is informed of a peace journey around Europe by a picture caption. The aspirations for peace have always had a strong

support in the public opinion in Sweden – but – we are told, the peace activists have also been accused of being too anti-NATO (Häger, 1985).

The fact that the catastrophe of two World Wars resulted in the foundation of the United Nations, its declaration to secure world peace and human rights is established in another textbook. The big tracks in the pre-war history are built up by following headlines: 'India becomes independent, Communists win China, Upheavals in Southeast Asia and National Liberation of Africa' (Öhman, 1989, 1991). The concept of peace has changed since the textbooks from the fifties and sixties. It has restated from a UN using arms to defend or re-establish peace in occasions of violent outbreaks into a concept where the armed fight for national independence and equality of the third world also is a fight for and a necessary condition for peace.

In a new textbook from the early nineties the theme of a fair world order is emphasized and marked by the headline: 'The third world is rising' The textbook also includes a very well known photo from 1968 when a Swedish politician, Olof Palme, marched together with an North Vietnamese diplomat in protest against North American aggression in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. The caption let us know that the Swedish policy of non-alignment hasn't prevented the Swedish government from act and take a clear stand against injustices (Öhman, 1989, 1991).

In the curricula of 1919 it was argued that the history subject should educate children about the importance of peace as a condition for human progress by using people worthy of imitate as examples. Those discussions or examples is not to be found in the history textbooks, except for Dag Hammarskjöld, instead this is to be found in the textbooks for the subjects of civic or religion. In the textbook for civic there is a discussion about the military defence in Sweden and the military service, conscientious objectors and other possibilities to serve the defence without wearing arms. The ethical aspects of peace are discussed in the textbook for religion. The headline is; 'Violence or non violence. Is it possible to defend peace by using non violence?' Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Jesse Jackson all represents non violence in different forms, but also names like the priest Camillo Torres who was shot dead by the Columbian military and arch bishop Oscar Romero who was murdered in El Salvador. The chapter ends in a discussion about the South African apartheid and the possibilities to avoid a civil war and how ANC has changed its tactic from a non violence standpoint to military action and sabotage (Hildingson et al 1990, 1993).

Our interpretation of the textbooks results in two conclusions. The first is that the actors in the world history in the eighties not only include the governments of Europe, the USA or the UN, but much more the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The Swedish nation is not only working for peace trough UN but has also become an active spokesman against colonialism and unjust conditions in the world. The moral defence of the poor and dependent countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America is included in the Swedish peace efforts. This has become an important part of the self image of the Swedish nation. The second conclusion is that the concept of peace has been redefined during the period and the redefinition is visible in the textbooks. It is not only the absence of violence which defines peace, but a fair world order as a precondition for establishing peace.

Children as political subjects – knowledge, feeling and action

In a picture-book for small children 'A diary through a cow's perspective' the daily life of a cow is told. She stands in the stable and it is raining outside. She eats, studies a spider, sees the rain pouring down through a window and now and then she takes a nap. All days are the same. One day she dreams that she visits a cinema, a café, eats an ice-cream, bicycles very fast, sings in a pop-band in Paris and takes a trip to New York and United Nations. 'Spoke in UN. Promoted peace in the world', the diary says (Wolgers & Landström, 1973, 1984). The cow's diary, a political message significant of the cold war, was revised to a popular animated film for children in 1985.

In what way are children seen as political subjects in education in purpose to be prepared for a future society? What kind of political agency do adults, teachers and parents permit children to develop when they are children? Or do grown ups prefer to protect children and set them outside society? Of course this has varied through history and among other factors it has been a question of time, place, class, generation and so on. Today this is a question implicit imbedded in the discourse of democracy and Citizenship Education, but we think it was more obvious and explicit in the 1970s and 1980s and highly stressed in

the 1980s peace education discourse. Jens Qvortrup, sociologist, writes: ‘... nobody should accept children’s exclusion from experiencing themselves as contributing persons in society’. (Qvortrup, 2008, p 8). In connection to the future and the concept generation he also says: ‘Children have always assumed a particular role – namely of being raw material for the production of an adult population. This is why we incessantly talk about them as our future or as the next generation.’(Qvortrup, 2008, p 15).

Åke Bjerstedt, professor in pedagogy at the Teachers Education in Malmö, and Bengt Thelin, at the Swedish National Board of Education, were actors in peace education in the 1980s. In the service material *Peace education, Peace – Liberty – Development – Human Rights* Thelin points out that schools should give children insights and ‘encourage children and young persons to subscribe to the fundamental values of our democracy and to manifest those values through practical, everyday action!’(Thelin, 1986, p 5). Peace education should be built on: Knowledge – to balance between a ‘threatening’ and a ‘concealing’ standpoint, objective but not ‘anxious objectivism’ and a ‘free and open debate’. Feeling – create empathy and understanding, Swedish schools should try to produce ‘active, committed individuals, not passive spectators’. Action – teachers should consider that ‘children and young persons react vehemently to discrepancies between words and actions’ (Thelin 1986, p 14-15).

Bjerstedt discusses the concept preparedness for the future. The components in this concept are world citizenship responsibility – international understanding, peace preparedness – non-violent conflict solutions, and equality attitudes – fair distribution between different groups in the world (Bjerstedt, 1985). Bjerstedt also has a clear standpoint on the role the subject history could play. It is important to teach about war in past times, and of course World War II, causes and consequences, but also the experiences of soldiers and the civil population, armament and the results of the disarmament negotiations, peace-movements and peace-heroes. The pupils should also study war propaganda and enemy stereotypes, be aware of the possibility to change conflicts rooted in historical problems and injustices between nations, groups and classes. Alternative visions should to be a part of the teaching, such as conflicts that were not solved by violence (Bjerstedt, 1985).

The thinking above appears in booklets called *Peace, Freedom and Justice* published by Alva and Gunnar Myrdals foundation, the Red Cross and the Swedish UN. The material is composed of teachers’ instructions from pre-school to secondary school and pupil’s booklets; one booklet for children 7-12 called ‘Mates on the peace-road’ and one booklet for secondary school without a specific title.

In all teachers’ instructions the point of departure is the same: the future depends on the knowledge of the new generations, but important knowledge of the situation in the world has been hidden from children and young persons (Teachers’ instructions 1987; 1988). The examples of peaceful conflict solutions are also the same, Åland 1921 and Norway and Sweden 1905.

Feeling is the main subject for children in pre-school. The difference between aggression and violence, how to handle war-games and to solve conflicts are central issues in the teachers’ instruction. Only when the grown ups can meet the fear of the children, a preparedness to act can be possible. Themes in a peace week could be: friends, co-operation, conflicts, feelings, songs from different countries and the word peace in different languages, The UN-day the 24th of October, the peace dove but also a difficult question: ‘Why do nations and peoples make war?’. In pre-school it is fostering and not education that is connected to the word peace. When it comes to history, remarks of past times are few, but evidence from new archeological and anthropological research states that war is a rather late phenomenon in the history of mankind. The front page shows a frequent symbol of children and peace; happy, smiling children from different parts of the world hand in hand with each other (Teachers’ instructions, pre-school, 1987).

Feeling and action are main subjects for children in primary school age 7-9 and feeling, action and knowledge for children age 10-12. The pupil’s booklet ‘Mates on the peace-road’, the same for children age 7-12, focuses on friendship, understanding refugee’s war experiences and different situations for children around the world, needs and injustices, and Children’s Rights interpreted by UN. It is also a practical handbook in action in which both girls and boys take leading positions. When it comes to history there is however a difference between the teachers’ instructions. For the younger children, 7-9, history starts with the first wars 14 000 years ago in the delta of Euphrates and Tigris where the soldier was created. To give hope the text says that culture is the only thing the human being could put up against aggression. For the older children, 10-12, the headline ‘War in past times ...’ tells mostly about colonialism and the history of Sweden which ends with neutrality. Actions like appointing peace-heroes, give peace prizes, understanding words, draw contrasting pictures on people in war and in peace, write

sentences on fear and hope, study magazines and comics, TV-news and TV-entertainments, learn how to conduct a meeting in an organization, discuss what is fair and what is unfair, make pen-friends around the world and read about children in other countries are frequent (Teachers' instructions, primary school, 1987). The front page of the pupil's booklet 'Mates on the peace-road' (1987) shows a happy active girl looking very encouraging at a smiling boy with his hands in his pocket.

Knowledge and action are the main focus for young persons in secondary school. The teacher instruction starts with a question: How shall I get my pupils interested and get them to feel anything, be happy, angry or sad? In the age of TV the information of violence and poverty are huge and it makes the young persons blasé. The answer is to work with pictures and the pupils own questions (Teachers' instructions, 1988). Knowledge is about armament, disarmament, nuclear war, consequences, different declarations and a future without war. The concept of freedom, defence system, and Swedish security politics and threats, poverty and food-crises, north-south-dialogue, UN and other organizations for peace are also a part of the knowledge agenda. The suggested actions consist mostly of searching for, gaining, discussing and evaluating different kinds of knowledge and in co-operation with each other to create action plans for change. Historical reference concerns mainly the nuclear threat and scares after World War II, except for the history of The League of Nations/UN and Sweden in past times (Teachers' instructions, 1988; Pupil's booklet, 1988). The headline 'From war to peace', is about anthropological studies of peaceful human cultures, like Pueblo Indians in USA and Lovedu in Transvaal (Pupil's booklet, 1988). On the front page on the pupil's booklet is a tied hand with the forefinger pointing at the reader, a symbol used during wartimes in USA meaning 'Uncle Sam needs you', but now - 'the world peace needs you'.

To summarize, some lines are to be identified. The concern about how to meet the small children's feelings, anxiety and fear, in pre-school change in secondary school to a concern about how to challenge the pupils to show some feelings at all. Alternative visions, peaceful conflict solutions and peace-heroes, are rooted in history or in anthropological cultural studies. Empathy and understanding for young children are mostly constructed around children in other countries and in secondary school no or few other young persons from other parts in the world are included in the material. Conflict solutions between individuals seem to be an issue in pre-school and primary school and state conflicts are a theme in secondary school. Finally, the political child, a subject prepared to act for peace; is seen as an object during pre-school, appears as an understanding subject during the age of 7-9, is visibly as a subject with energy and power during the age of 10-12 and can possibly bloom during secondary school and - if that is so - the subject takes a personal standpoint built on knowledge and arguments.

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