

The State of the Art of Intergenerational Education and Learning in Sweden

Introduction/background

The Intergenerational perspective is conspicuous by its absence in Sweden, compared to several other countries where specific programmes exist for activities across generational boundaries. Activities across generational boundaries have also been a specific area where financial incentives for local projects was provided 10-15 years ago through the government's project Freedom of Choice /Older People and Public Health. But despite these efforts, comprehensive and systematic measures to develop and strengthen contacts across generational boundaries have been few and far between in Sweden. Instead, official measures within various areas have targeted different groups, often defined in terms of their age and stage of life course.

(1) About generations and the relationship between them

How are generations and the relationships between them perceived in your country ?

It is an old tradition in Sweden that the section of the family responsible for the household are to provide care for children and the elderly. Mostly this family consisted not only of relatives but also of servants and others who lived on the homestead. This tradition was formalized for a minority group in the Swedish society, the free-holder farmers, through the introduction in the 18th century of a contract providing for a life annuity stipulated in an agreement for, or in conjunction with, the transfer of ownership of their homestead. This legally binding contract stipulated, for those elderly people who had transferred ownership of their homestead to their children or others, the provision of such items as corn, meat and kindling.

In Sweden, as in other countries, conflicts between generations have arisen when it has no longer been tenable to retain the established means for ensuring the maintenance of living conditions for elderly people in the face of the new economic, social or demographic pressures. There are a number of examples where legislation was introduced or strengthened during the 19th century, with regard to the protection of the elderly, as pressure increased on the rural system of annuity contracts as a result of successive years of misery, involving crop failure and starvation. At the same time, increasing number of elderly were to be found in urban areas who were no longer able to work and whose children were not able to take them in, or support them, since they were most often living in overcrowded conditions and earning only low incomes. The

difficulties which were giving rise to conflicts of interests between generations were eventually resolved through the introduction of the state old-age pension scheme and the new approaches to organizing health services and care for the elderly.

During the 20th century, the state took over many of the responsibilities of the family, from childcare to care for the elderly. The institutions have continued to develop their activities and this has provide the Swedish population with a welfare system that provide broad support for individuals throughout life. At the same time, the family is still expected to bridge between institutions or to care for people that do not fit the standard institutions. In a work context, generations can indicate a relation between a senior and junior employee but this relation is not necessarily based on age differences, as it can also describe competence differences. Generations in a work context can also refer to cycles of development. The general definition of generation is that generation refers to age in terms of differences between age groups and/or belonging to a certain age group.

Is there evidence that this has been changing over the last decade ?

Long term sustainable means for ensuring the quality of life for the elderly, without placing unreasonable burdens on their children or other relatives, still remains one of the most important prerequisites for good relations between generations, both with regard to family life and society at large. In the light of demographic change, the issue as to the long-term sustainability of such solutions is becoming increasingly contentious. In discussions the contract between generations has become a loaded question. With regard to pensions, it has been claimed that it is no longer obvious that solidarity across generation boundaries can, over time be taken for granted. The unanimity that originally surrounded the idea that young adult generations are to bear responsibility for dependent children and elderly is not always considered to necessarily extend to that growing group of senior citizens who have left working life behind them in order to concentrate on realizing themselves as individuals.

What are the existing forms of solidarity and cooperation between generations in your country?

(2) National legal framework of intergenerational education/ learning/ learning opportunities

Which national policy measures are supportive of the generations and/or solidarity and cooperation among them ?

In the government's reports and work with the elderly the intergenerational issue is targeted to a certain extent. In a report from 2002 called Senior 2005 the following view is stated (SOU 2002:29):

The challenges posed by an ageing population imply that society requires continued measures for sustainable development between generations over time. Mutually across generation boundaries in particular must be strengthened and developed in those areas of importance for the economy and for the power structure in society. Through such mutuality, senior citizens will also be brought into an issue concerning participation in, and responsibility for, political decisions. Notice ought to be drawn to the possibility of promoting long-term meetings and cooperation between people from different generations in all sectors of society. It is necessary to establish structures for this purpose, which should be coordinated to form a foundation for subsequent developments.

At the same time it is pointed out that the intergenerational perspective is conspicuous by its absence in Sweden, compared to several other countries where specific programmes exist for activities across generational borders.

(3) Intergenerational education, training and learning opportunities in partner country

From your national perspective, what makes intergenerational education/ training and learning intergenerational ? What conditions must be fulfilled for them to be intergenerational?

"Intergenerational programmes are vehicles for the purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations. " as described in the UNESCO document from 2001.

The Swedish welfare state and the public sector has assumed responsibility for social service and care for elderly and children. The care for the elderly is a public responsibility and is provided by qualified staff, who have been specially trained. The increased degree of employment for women has been met by policy designed for childcare. Although care for the young and the old is a public responsibility, informal care is provided by both family and volunteers. There are no reliable numbers for the amount of help that is given but it is estimated to be of great importance. The informal care goes both ways. Younger people are helping their parents and retired parents take care of their grandchildren. Most retired people in Sweden live by themselves but are reasonably near to their friends and relatives. There are many initiatives across the countries that are not yet documented. These are individual as well as initiatives from churches and sports- and culture- organizations. Differences are evident between rural and city areas.

Since the Swedish society is very concerned with age and often group people according to age, generations are often generally referred to as a group of people born in the same decade. In media, people can be referred to as for example belonging to the 40s, 70s or 90s generation. Intergenerational is thus something involving different generations according to this classification.

Funding and ending

The Swedish Government adopted the theme of the UN international Year of Older Persons "A Society for All Ages" during 1999. Within this there was an effort towards bringing about a broader discussion on subjects like lifelong learning and contacts between generations and as a follow up the government started the Elderly project to work with these questions.

In Sweden the Department of Education and Science has the responsibility for childcare and education for children. The Department for Health and Social affairs is responsible for old age care. However in the Elderly project there were representatives from both Departments so it would be made easier to connect the different generations. The Elderly project also had the responsibility for funding of projects. Projects could be applied for in four different categories, where two could be titled "care" and two were more about intergenerational issues.

The themes were:

1. Participation of the elderly in the community and the elderly in working life.
2. Young people and the elderly together for a better future.
3. Attitudes towards growing old and the elderly.

When the Elderly project distributed the money for new initiatives in June 1999, 10 out of 64 projects selected were intergenerational programmes. Three of these were IT projects, where the aim was to connect young and old people in virtual reality as well as in reality. One project was to inform students in 4th to 6th grade about ageing and dementia. Another project was named "over generation barriers" and one was called Young meets Old. There was also one where young people escorted old and one named Mix of Generations. There was also one project that should organize a meeting place for people of different ages and one project, which goal was to develop common meeting places for all generations. Another programme was started by the retired people's organisation the PRO. The PRO has a congress every 4th year. At the conference 1996 they decided that they should include a section on intergenerational learning (Gemenskap mellan generationerna) in their program.

There were three objectives in that program:

1. To decrease the segregation between the younger and the older generations.
2. To create a society that is safe for all, in co-operation with other generations.
3. By experience and knowledge to increase their involvement in society

Those Swedish intergenerational programmes were new initiatives in many cases, and there were few evaluations and no longer time assessments applied to them. Therefore it was not possible to assess their effectiveness and accessibility. Most of the projects ended when the funding ended.

One program that did survive – perhaps because it was not funded and not top-down but instead started from bottom-up is the granddad programme which has given many children opportunities of meeting an older man, which has been very effective for both participants. Many more schools were anxious to get a granddad and they have now developed into a National association.

Is there a tradition of intergenerational education/training/learning in your country and what can be learned from current and past practices? Please give examples where possible.

Contacts across generational boundaries and solidarity between generations are not new issues in Swedish policy with regard to senior citizens. For example, solidarity between generations had been the theme for the European Year for Older People 1993 when this was held in Sweden. In their final report (SOU 1994:39) the Swedish Committee for the European Year of Older People stated that the reason behind the selection of this theme had been the claim that the divisions between generations had probably become wider in Sweden than perhaps in any other European country. The committee went on to state that, in retrospect, research has indicated that this claim was to some extent erroneous. The increasing number of senior citizens in Sweden living alone does not necessarily imply increased abandonment and isolation but rather increased independence at an advantaged age.

In Adult education, however, it is the opposite situation. Adult education facilities in Sweden are available for those who are 20 years of age or older. It is also possible to delay entry into higher education in order gain work experience. In Sweden, any adult is eligible to enter some form of higher education, including a university, on condition that they have either a pass grade from the equivalent of the upper secondary school or adult education.

There is no upper age-limit for commencing university studies, so that even after the official retirement age, there are opportunities available for senior citizens to commence studies at this, or some other, level. It is, in fact, these senior citizens who form the backbone of participants in voluntary forms of popular education. One form of popular education, established in Sweden since the latter part of the 19th century, are the programmes offered through what are known as “study circles,” which at present are organised by 11 nationwide voluntary educational associations. Another form of popular education is that offered by what are known as folk high schools, about 150 throughout the country, and which are run either by county councils or by trade unions, churches, temperance societies or other non-governmental organizations. The programmes they offer are largely residential and they are more comprehensive than those provided by the voluntary educational associations. The latter are usually affiliated with a political party or interest organization. Both folk high schools and voluntary educational associations receive state subsidies while remaining very free to organize the courses and to develop the contents much as they wish.

Why and in what form are intergenerational education/training/learning opportunities needed in your country and I why are they needed in different

settings (formal education/informal education/ local community, urban and rural environment, at work/ in neighbourhood, etc.) ?

Cultural life provides many opportunities for meetings across generational boundaries and a deeper understanding of age and belonging to a certain generation. However the fact that cultural policies have so strongly targeted groups has meant that these opportunities have not always been grasped. Further, in Sweden there have been an almost complete lack of initiatives to provide intergenerational activities with a foundation, based on tried and tested methods and long-term effects in various areas. Intergenerational activities have generally taken the form of projects, initiated and lead by “fiery spirits”, and often running out of steam when the time, energy and engagement of such leading lights become depleted.

Senior 2005 considered that there are opportunities in cultural policies, for the long-term development of an intergenerational perspective and therefore it is a matter of some urgency that appropriate methods and working arrangements be put in place. An initial step in this regard would be to draw greater attention to age as a cultural phenomenon and cultural construction in initiatives involving target groups that are determined by age. Other types of initiatives could include common activities for learning, creating and exchanges across generational boundaries.

The Intergenerational perspective is not a special issue in Sweden. There have been special initiatives initiated by the government especially during the 1990s but few of these were sustainable. There are though several initiatives where the gap between different generations is closing by recent different initiatives as i.e. students in universities and high schools have started to care for and help young students with their lessons. There is also movements especially within different churches to work with volunteering.

The special Swedish intergenerational program is the “Granddad program”. It was initiated as a pilot project in the autumn of 1996, as the result of the interest shown by a male senior citizen in assisting a handicrafts teacher in school on a voluntary basis. The project is based on the understanding that those senior citizens who wish to do so, ought to be given the opportunity to work in schools, in order to improve the quality of their lives through this engagement and the network in which they thereby participate. Increased social capital which have been defined by Coleman (1988, 1990) have been found in the schools that have employed a granddad. The results show that the work of the class granddad, both together with the teacher and outside during the breaks, also influences, in a positive way, the social capital between the pupils and the teacher. The work of the teacher is very greatly influenced by the relationships between the pupils in the group.

The program has deepened the understanding of meetings between generations in those schools which have introduced a class granddad, an additional adult in their activities. It rests on earlier research on informal learning, which takes place between an older and a younger generation, a part of lifelong learning.

During the period between 1996 and 2009 the project has developed quite remarkably. From one granddad 1996 in Stockholm there are now around 1000 granddads all over Sweden. There is one national association and eleven regional associations.

The regional associations have connections with the regional folkhighschools and they organize education and training during one semester in these folkhighschools. There is a defined curriculum and they have theory as well as practice in regional schools. After finishing the training there is an exam and they receive a certificate.

The Swedish granddads are working in schools from preschool to upper secondary schools. There are both men and women working as granddads now. Recently there have also been courses for those who want to work i.e. a library (55+ and unemployed).

What formats and methods are predominately being used for intergenerational education/training in your country? (if applicable)

(4) Practice of intergenerational education/training events and learning opportunities

Who are current providers of intergenerational education /training events and learning opportunities in your country?

Please name and describe current four outstanding national initiatives in the field of intergenerational education / training or learning opportunities in your country, including your own work.

Although there has been a long history of intergenerational interventions in Sweden, in terms of the considerable level of informal learning that has taken place, and which continues to take place today, the concept of intergenerational programmes is not in common useage. Today many initiatives continue to be taken throughout the country, for example, on the part of individuals, voluntary organizations, and interest groups, such as churches and sports associations.

Concerning intergenerational education and/or training events and learning opportunities most project and initiatives do not focus on the intergenerational aspect as such, but rather on the topic at hand. Most older-younger interactions are based on a certain knowledge or a desire to require a certain knowledge, and less focus is aimed at developing the trainers. Studies of the granddad programme have resulted in knowledge about how to improve intergenerational learning and this knowledge could be a basis for extending formal and informal education on IL.

(5) Partner organisation(s)] as a provider of intergenerational education

About Encell

Encell is the overall national body responsible for conducting research as well as knowledge dissemination within adult education and learning. Since its foundation in 2001, Encell has been funded by the Government as well as by external fund providers. Encell is primarily concerned with research focusing on aspects of lifelong learning and dissemination of research findings through active collaboration in partnerships and networks.

Encell is established as a natural and obvious source of knowledge on lifelong learning focusing on adult education and learning. The work is based on partnership cooperation between Encell and - primarily - a number of national partners within adult education and learning, but also regional and local interested parties are of great importance in our work. The research at Encell is conducted within the research programme Lifelong Learning. The programme forms a vital part of the research school given by HLK focusing on learning and communication. Encell has three main paths: research, knowledge dissemination and partnerships and networks.

1. Research

Our research within the field of lifelong learning and adult learning should contribute to knowledge development in the long-term perspective, as well as the development of a knowledge base on adult learning, workplace learning and aspects of competence development which is of obvious and practical interest to those concerned. The acquired knowledge should also contribute to the renewal and regeneration of professional and working life. These aims and objectives are articulated in the research programme Lifelong Learning. The principal aim of Lifelong Learning is to conduct research on various aspects, manifestations and dimensions of lifelong learning. The programme is currently based on the conditions for lifelong learning in educational environments as well as in work life and on lifelong learning as a policy area.

2. Knowledge dissemination

Encell is on an overall national level responsible for business intelligence and knowledge dissemination concerning research findings and experiences within adult learning and competence development. Encell has also been assigned the specific responsibility of making research-based knowledge on learning accessible and available to interested and responsive parties in business, industries and NGOs so that new knowledge can be transformed into practical action, thereby in a concrete way contributing to the renewal, regeneration and development of working and professional life.

3. Partnerships and networks

Encell works in close collaboration with several other actors, nationally and internationally, in order to create research platforms and environments through partnerships and networks. Furthermore, Encell is a partner in the cooperation between regional bodies, trade and industry, educational actors, institutions etc. Encell is a

driving force in the development and initiation of new thinking and new ideas concerning flexible and innovative aspects of learning and competence development, based on the perspective of the learning individual but also from a system perspective. Encell contributes to new thoughts on systems for learning and knowledge development within industries, NGOs and the public sector. Furthermore, Encell is actively working to realise practical applications and tests of topical and creative projects within strategic areas of lifelong learning.

What is your organisation's experience in the field of Intergenerational projects ? Please, describe them (if applicable),

The core of our intergenerational work is performed by Dr. Ann-Kristin Boström, PhD in International Education and affiliated researcher at Encell. Ann-Kristin Boström is Director of Education in the Swedish National Agency for Education and Special Advisor for the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research. She has a background as a teacher and has a BA from Gothenburg University and an MA and a PhD from Stockholm University, Institute of International Education. She has made two evaluations of Lifelong learning in Sweden. One for CEDEFOP, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, with the title "The extent to which vocational training policy is nurturing lifelong learning in Sweden". The second evaluation was conducted for the Ministry of Education and the European Commission regarding the Sokrates and Leonardo programmes. Boström participated in an expert group for the Council of Europe, Steering Committee for Education, where she is one of the Swedish representatives. Her special research interests are lifelong learning, intergenerational learning and social capital. She is currently a Research Fellow at Encell, conducting research about intergenerational learning within a European project, together with two colleagues. She is part of EMIL, an international network for intergenerational learning and member of the editorial board of the Journal of Intergenerational Relationships.

In addition to Boströms work, we are involved in a network called ActivAge.se. This network aims at developing knowledge about older adults learning. We have written a book called "Leva hela livet" (living a whole life) where 15 people have written short life stories about how they view the role of work and learning later in life. An on-going project is called the Senior Doctoral Students, a group that is in the process of doing studies of older adults learning in Sweden. We also arrange workshops and seminars on the theme Active Aging. This year one workshop will be held on March 22, and then we are hosts for a national conference on research on active aging, SwedAge.se, on October 17.

What permanent intergenerational activities does your organisation conduct? Please, describe them(if applicable).

We are initiating a network for intergenerational learning and a node on our website where we will collect information about intergenerational projects that are going on throughout Sweden. For the long-term development, we also see the need to develop knowledge and materials that can be used in intergenerational training.

Summary and Recommendations

Please, summarise the main points of this report and provide recommendations concerning specific cultural, social and other aspects of intergenerational learning in your country that need to be taken into account when modifying UK training materials as to meet your national needs.

Because of the old traditions which in turn has been supported by the welfare policy it seems likely that the intergenerational issues in Sweden has to be needed from the grassroots and supported by the government at the same time. There is currently a demand for solutions of how to solve intergenerational gaps in the workplace and this would probably be the best issue to target regarding the Swedish participation.

Literature and references:

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Name of the partner organisation and of the person(s) reporting.

Date of reporting: 19 February 2013

Signature:

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