IN SEARCH OF THE NORDIC MODEL IN EDUCATION

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The Nordic model of education is defined in this article as an attempt to construct a national education system on the foundation of specific local values and practices, but at the same time subject to international influences. According to the author, equity, participation and welfare are the major goals and the publicly funded comprehensive school system is the major form of the ideal Nordic model. The actual and nationally varying transformation of the model or pattern from the Golden Years of the welfare state in the 1960s and 1970s until the age of restructuring from the 1990s has been described in more detail. The conditions and prospects of the Nordic model are tentatively discussed.

keywords: global-local, Nordic model, welfare state, comprehensive school system

LOCAL AND GLOBAL IN THE NORDIC CASE

I argue that there are two facets to education as a social institution, general or global and particular or local. Their relationship may be characterized as dialectic (Izquierdo & Minguez 2003). Along with globalization, and thus as a politically and economically determined part of world order, education has become organized into a very uniform system in all parts of the world, in common with science and technology (Meyer, Ramirez, Rubinson & Boli 1977). Spread of the state as the dominant political form all around the world has been the salient factor in defining education. Industrialization and urbanization, and subsequent economic competition under conditions of technological change and regional integration, have been economic determinants of education.

On the other hand, education also has its specific and local side, which is discernible at least culturally, but often also in political and economic terms. In current debate, it might be characterized through e.g. the concept of multiculturalism. Education may be employed as creator of resources when actively endeavouring to reach various socio-political or cultural goals, such as justice, democracy, equality or tolerance and pluralism. Education is relatively independent in relation to the rest of society and use of power. The Nordic or Scandinavian model of education is defined in this article as such an attempt to construct a national education system on the foundation of specific local values and practices, but at the same time subject to international conditions and influences, and even as an internationally influential example (1). Equity, participation and welfare state have been known as the major socio-political attributes of the Nordic model. The fourth attribute might be held to be progressiveness either as realization of a search for new, unprejudiced solutions, or at least as an image and myth associated with Scandinavian culture.

Torsten Husén’s vision of a learning society, first introduced in the 1960s and found e.g. in his collected essays (Husén 1974 and 1986), is in my view a good representation of an attempt at conceptualizing a Nordic model of an education system that is nevertheless adapted to an international environment. My interpretation is that he discusses it according to four criteria: i) people have an opportunity for lifelong learning, ii) formal education extends to the whole age
group, iii) informal learning is in central position and self-studies encouraged and iv) other institutions support education which in turn depends on them (Antikainen 2005, 3).

Within the context of the ‘knowledge explosion’, increasing the content of instruction does not help according to Husén, but what is required is learning to learn: “Only the person who never stops learning will be able to cope with society’s increasingly complex technological future” (Husén 1974, back cover). Thus, it may be said that he already saw beyond the rising ‘first generation’ humanistic lifelong learning the 'second generation' lifelong learning of the economic era (Rubenson 1999). Of course, the roots of lifelong learning are deeper in the Nordic countries. For example, the Finnish proverb Oppia ikä kaikki [All life is learning] is centuries old. The necessity of coping under Nordic conditions and the prevalent Protestant work ethic have nourished lifelong learning.

In the 1960s and 1970s, compulsory education in all Nordic countries was extended to nine years, and the comprehensive model was adopted as the starting point of developing the whole education system. This took place under conditions of strong industrialization, development of a service society and seemingly stable economic growth, inspired by a more or less social-democratic ideology that stressed equality. Sweden was the trailblazer and model. However, in other Nordic countries, education policy was more pragmatic. Particularly in Denmark, the national nature of compulsory education has been more localized, uniformity has been less pronounced and alternatives have been real also in practice. In Norway, Finland and Iceland, the regional policy dimension has been central. Alongside citizenship, producing a national identity has played an important role in curricula. The effect of long common compulsory education on duration of education is still in evidence as a common feature in international comparisons (OECD 2004). Preschool education and a possible optional 10th year or equivalent have further increased pupils’ school years. A Nordic group of PISA researchers describes the Scandinavian strategy as follows:

The Nordic strategy for building up high quality and equality in education has been based on construction of publicly funded comprehensive school system without selecting, tracking or streaming students during their basic education until the age of 16. Part of the strategy is to spread the school network so that pupils have a school near their homes whenever possible or if this is not feasible, e.g. in rural areas, to provide free transportation to more widely dispersed schools. Inclusion of special education and instructional efforts to minimise low achievement are also typical to Nordic educational systems. (Lie, Linnakylä & Roe 2003, 8.)

However, the form and structure of curricula are not only founded on building a national identity, but they are largely uniform in the whole of the Western world (Meyer et. al. 1992). A salient part of Nordic pedagogic progressiveness has been unscrupulous borrowing of international influences, at least from John Dewey to Paulo Freire (Broady 1986).

OVERALL EDUCATION SYSTEM

The majority of pupils continue into secondary level education. In Norway it is compulsory, and in the other countries open to everybody. For example in Finland, more than 90 percent of young people (95% in 2004) continue immediately at intermediate level. In Sweden, the intermediate level is organized as a unified upper secondary school (gymnasieskola), while in the other Nordic countries it is more decentralized. In Denmark, Finland and Iceland, liberal or popular and vocational education are separate, albeit that the latter works in co-operation with liberal education. For example in Finland, particularly teachers of upper secondary school, the liberal education provider, have defended the independence of their school form, appealing to the importance of
preserving the high quality of teaching and the common national matriculation examination. They have wanted to preserve upper secondary school as an academic avenue.

In common with certain countries in continental Europe, a large part of vocational training in the Nordic countries takes place in schools, but there is also apprenticeship training offered. This has especially been developed in Denmark and Norway. In any case, links between school and working life have been increased in many ways in all the countries, and school form and apprenticeship training have come closer to each other. Competence-based education and degrees, first for adults and now also for young people are a new innovation in this respect.

Universities are the oldest and most autonomous part of education systems. Nordic universities have historically been strongly influenced by the German university model. In all Nordic countries, other forms of higher education exist alongside universities, in common with many other countries (Dahllöf & Selander 1996). In this respect, the Swedish system in terms of its administration is the clearest representation of an integrated higher education system type, and the Finnish system, after establishment of polytechnics in the 1990s, most clearly represents the dual model. Due to its small size and international connections, Iceland is a slightly different case from the others. The university was established in 1911, and studying abroad is still commonplace. Based on a Sweden-Norway comparison, Urban Dahllöf (1996, 199-200) argues that there is a common Scandinavian denominator at least so far as: the number of private schools and private higher education institutions is low; higher education and research is regarded as a public good of great economic and cultural significance; higher education has been relatively well protected from severe budget cuts in state economy; a great expansion of higher education has taken place since the 1960s in student numbers and in the geographical dispersion of new institutions; instruction is free from tuition fees also at the postgraduate level; research has been concentrated in a limited number of universities and specialised institutions located in big and medium-sized cities by Scandinavian standards; international links in many directions have cultivated the research culture; the principles of lifelong learning and recurrent education are recognized; several institutions offer credit-courses at a distance.

Training of teachers for liberal upper secondary school education in all Nordic countries is subject-specific, and teachers must be university graduates. The format of teacher training for other school levels and forms varies, but is always based on professionalism of the teacher’s job and includes pedagogic studies. In Finland, training of primary school teachers and nursery teachers is also a Master’s degree (M.A., Master of Arts, Master of Education), which has been internationally noted in attempts to pinpoint reasons for the high success rates of Finnish youngsters in PISA studies. This training of teachers for a research-based professionalism has proved on average to correspond well to such new policy developments as school-based curricula and local decision-making (Westbury, Hansen, Kansanen & Björkvist 2005).

Adult education has a long tradition in all Nordic countries. Liberal or popular adult education institutionalized from civic movement origins has now been joined by vocational or job-related adult education which has grown very rapidly over the last decades. According to Tuijnman and Hellström (2001), no one-dimensional Nordic model of adult education exists. Yet there are distinguishable Nordic patterns including a high participation rate, a high share of public funding and public suppliers, and a high share of personal interest in (liberal) adult education.

The national comprehensive school system based on the goals of equity and participation and lifelong learning form the most important foundations of the Nordic model of education. However, the national education systems differ in detail. Furthermore, starting from the 1980s and
increasingly from the 1990s, education has been the target of restructuring processes, meaning decentralization, deregulation and commercialization.

ISSUE OF EQUITY

The optimism still prevalent in the 1970s about education as the great equalizer has clearly proved to be unfounded. In social stratification, education is primarily a social selector – a part of the mechanism of reproduction of stratification – that transfers social differences from one generation to the next. With the exception of structural changes, the model of social mobility has largely been similar in all the countries where the central institutions are market economy and the nuclear family. Studies on the social background of students in higher education show slight levelling in the social class distribution of the student body in Finland (Kivinen, Hedman & Ahola 2001) and Norway (Hellevik 1997), but not in Denmark (Munk 2003).

What is the situation within compulsory education, the final years of basic education? One way of explaining inequality in education is to examine it in relation to more general societal inequities (Marks 2005, 484). According to this, e.g. the result obtained in the first international study of reading and similarly the mathematics study, showing a low correlation between father’s occupational status and school attainment in Finland and Sweden, has been interpreted to stem from the low differences in income, and more generally low class differences, in the Nordic countries (Husén 1967; 206; Thorndike 1973, 76-77). Since then, the result has been replicated in the PISA studies, although in Marks’s own analysis of reading literacy, the association remains weak.

Another prominent explanation makes the assumption that inequality in education should be reduced along with modernization and economic development. There is very little proof of this. Rather, Bourdieu’s (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990) theory of the education system as maintainer of social reproduction, and thus essentially of reproduction of differences and inequality, corresponds with prevalent sociological thinking. Marks’s (2005) results also support the premise that economic level of development (empirically indicated by per capita GDP) is only slightly associated with reduction in inequality. Conversely, cultural modernization (empirically indicated by the percentage with a university education) is very strongly associated with lessening of socio-economic inequalities in education.

The third main explanation focuses on the connection between differentiation of education and tracking and inequality. Earlier results, according to which tracking and other forms of educational differentiation can magnify social inequalities (Muller & Karle 1993; Oakes 1990), are well known. The results of Marks (2005, 494-495) point in a similar direction:

The greater the number of schools tracks, the stronger the effects of class background. Similarly, the greater the difference between schools in student performance (the intra-class correlation), the stronger the effects of class background.

This interpretation is the most powerful explanation of inequality. However, it should be noted that differentiation per se is not the cause and the problem, but the way it is implemented: that students are placed in different learning environments in terms of development of their abilities. For example, the common use of special education in Finnish schools is not linked to growth of inequalities, but to their reduction. Thus, all in all, the Nordic model of comprehensive education is worthy of its reputation from a comparative perspective, as producer of low social inequalities.
In addition to producing social stratification, the school is party to producing a gender system. From birth, different expectations are directed at boys and girls, and they are treated differently. The Nordic tradition favouring gender equality is often deemed to have started from the husband and wife partnership (gender companies) of the agrarian society and division of labour on smallholdings (Hentilä, Krötzl & Pulma 2002, 303). In development of education, this equality is clearly in evidence.

Officially, education and curricula in the Nordic countries are gender neutral, but in practice, it is impossible. Participation of women in education has undergone strong growth in recent decades, and the Nordic countries are world leaders in this respect (Jönsson 2003). In fact, e.g. in Finland, women are on average more highly educated than men. Instead, there is a gendered segregation in the labour market, or educational sectors are clearly divided into women’s and men’s fields, and women’s average earnings, for example, are lower than men’s. In the main, this is due to a kind of paradox of the welfare state: women are often placed in public sector welfare professions, and men in the private sector. However, women also receive lower remuneration on average for the same work. In any case, women are active users of education in the Nordic countries, where a high proportion of women is in employment.

Since boys are often the most problematic group in the higher grades of basic education, and since the greatest problem group of young people is mostly considered to be working-class boys in large cities, it has been suggested that schools need more male teachers. The proportion of men in the teaching profession is low, albeit higher than in most other parts of the world. However, it has been shown that justifications of the need for male teachers are contradictory, and that students do not see the gender of the teacher as very important (Lahelma 2000). More generally, too, it is important to remember that gender, social class or ethnic group differences are not stereotyped or unidimensional. Intra-group differences may be greater than inter-group differences. Gordon, Holland and Lahelma (2000, 203) conclude in their large-scale ethnographic field study that students want ‘well-ordered, well-organized environments which are also flexible and sympathetic, and allow all students to make spaces for themselves’.

Equality of educational opportunities may be examined at least in respect of the following factors: i) educational provision and organization, ii) access to education, iii) use of education and iv) educational outcomes. Perfect equality of education and especially equality of educational outcomes is socially both an impossible and undesirable goal. However, it is already possible to paraphrase Husén (1972) and talk about narrow and broad interpretation of equality, or a conservative, liberal and radical interpretation, depending on whether intervention is included in factors causing inequality under the concept of equal opportunities or not. A narrow interpretation means that equal opportunities are deemed to have been fulfilled when formal obstacles, such as those set by legislation, are removed from access to public education of individuals and groups. A broad interpretation includes under equal opportunities intervention in factors causing differences, especially children’s cultural, linguistic and social disadvantages. Reducing inequalities in educational outcomes does not best succeed by treating all groups in precisely the same way, but in accordance with the resources of each group. Examples may be found from levelling of the cost of study according to wealth, right down to differences in teaching methods. An example of the latter might be teaching ethnic minorities with respect shown to their culture. I argue that the Nordic use of the concept of equality in educational opportunities has included characteristics from the broad and radical interpretation of equality.

GOLDEN YEARS OF THE WELFARE STATE
In the 1920s, governments of all the Nordic countries still followed an economic policy based on liberalistic doctrine, according to which at times of recession, public expenditure had to be cut (Hentilä, Krötzl & Pulma 2002, 253). It was thought that, akin to laws of nature, the markets would correct the economic trend and growth would resume. In the same way, socialists believed that socialism would defeat capitalism, like a law of nature. Under the conditions of the Depression of the 1930s, the beliefs changed. Social democrats accepted a certain kind of planned economy, where the state purposely intervened in the economy. At the same time, the labour movement abandoned the struggle for a direct revolution and set at its goal as wide a democratic control of the economy and society as possible. The common decision was binding, for, as Hobsbawm (1994, 306) says:

They (workers) were united, finally by the central element of their life, collectivity: the domination of ‘us’ over ‘I’. What gave labour movements and parties their original strength was the justified conviction of workers that people such as they could not improve their lot by individual action, but only by collective action, preferably through organizations, whether by mutual aid, striking or voting.

After the Second World War, selection of this ‘third way’ was forced to prove its credibility and to gain a certain trust of both parties of the Cold War. Lessons of the Depression, the rapid and sustained economic growth and political will towards equality and solidarity formed favourable preconditions for building the Scandinavian welfare state. Finland and Iceland also adopted the emergent Nordic model, albeit with some delay. The cornerstones of the Nordic model were:
- Citizens’ equal social rights
- Responsibility of public authority (state) for welfare of all citizens
- Striving towards narrowing of differences in income and gender equality
- Striving towards full employment.
In addition, the model is supported by the Nordic labour market model, with a high degree of organization of employees and employers, collective bargaining and highly developed employment legislation created in co-operation between governments and labour organizations. Naturally, there are also great differences in the details of labour market relations between the Nordic countries.

Development of the welfare state was part of the history of European modernization. According to Stein Rokkan (1970), the modern state has developed in four stages since the 1700s. He calls the first stage the taxation and military state, the second the national state, the third the state based on democratic use of power, and the fourth stage is the welfare state based on ‘social citizenship’, with all citizens having equal social rights and benefits in addition to political rights and freedoms. The welfare state is the most important contribution of the Nordic countries to world history of the 1900s. (Hentilä, Krözl & Pulma 2002, 311.)

In this change, education plays at least a dual role. According to exponents of the institutional approach, mass schooling was a part of the rationalistic ideology of modern society, and produced the individual needed for its implementation, as well as the model of future society (Boli 1989). In this model, mass education was a functional necessity. Secondly, education was a social right and part of public services, with both research and government monitoring its tasks and expansion.

Gösta Esping-Andersen (1990) distinguishes three types of welfare state developed in Western Europe. In the liberal model, the primary foundations of social security are private markets and the family. If they fail, national social policy may step in. However, the support should be temporary and minimal. Income transfers are small and they are directed at the poorest. This liberal model has
been prevalent in the Anglo-American world. The second type is referred to as conservative welfare state by Esping-Andersen. Here, the welfare of the individual is closely linked to the economy and labour markets. Social income transfers are based on performance in working life. Prevailing status and class differences are maintained as far as possible. Importance of income transfers is relatively slight. The conservative or corporativistic model has been common in Central and Western Europe.

The third Esping-Andersen type is the Nordic or social democratic model. Services and income transfers in this model reach all citizens, in accordance with the universal principle of social rights. Services and income transfers are produced by public authority, and their level is generally high. The proportion of private healthcare, insurance cover and particularly private education is marginal. The Nordic model was created and implemented through strong input of public authority and under prevalence of wide-ranging party and corporative consensus. In economic terms, it is based on extensive employment uptake of the population and relatively low unemployment. (2)

The two or three decades of reconstruction after the war meant a period of development and stability, which e.g. in Anglo-American literature was called the quarter-century ‘Golden Age’ (Marglin & Schor 1990; Hobsbawm 1994, 258). Thus, the rapid development of Nordic welfare states also falls in this period. It was linked to the change of occupational structure that took place at unprecedented speed, and which Hobsbawm dramatically calls ‘the death of the peasantry’. The number of workers in industry and service personnel grew. In place of folk school, the growing groups were served by extended basic education. Increase in occupations requiring secondary and university education was considerable. Between 1960-80, the number of students in higher education in most European countries grew four or five-fold, and e.g. Finland, Iceland and Sweden were some of the countries where it grew five-to-seven-fold. In Norway, growth was even more rapid.

Erik Allardt (1976; 1993) in his comparative Nordic study divided welfare and its indicators into three classes: material standard of living or Having, social relations or Loving, and opportunities for self-realization or Being, as the opposite of alienation. According to his results, the differences between Nordic countries were not great, but on most indicators, the average results of Finland and the Finns were the weakest. Iceland was not included in the study, but measured by level of social expenditure, it is placed along with Finland at a lower level than the (rest of) Scandinavia.

In Allardt’s classification, education comes under material standard of living or Having, but naturally, education also has other effects and meanings. It also produces social and cultural resources: social identity (e.g. occupational and regional), confidence and thus social capital, language and communication skills etc. The significance of education has grown and is growing alongside social change.

SIGNS OF CRISIS

Student unrest of 1968 and elsewhere workers’ pay unrest provided the first signal that the Golden Age was coming to an end. Regardless of their international nature, their manifestations varied in different Nordic countries. In Finland, which had signed a Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union, a Marxist-Leninist student movement that idolized Stalin gained support, and engaged e.g. in seeking out ‘anti-Soviet propaganda’ from textbooks. Apart from Finland, in the Nordic countries only in Iceland did communists have sufficient support to participate in the country’s government.
A more serious change was brought about by the international economic difficulties of the early 70s, and particularly the oil and economic crisis of 1974. The gross national product declined in developed industrialized countries, and world economy no longer grew at the former rate. In most Nordic countries, this economic crisis also meant the first, albeit minor, cuts in welfare and education.

However, centrally controlled education systems based on the Swedish model also attracted other kinds of criticism and challenges. The criticism was especially aimed at the bureaucracy, lack of attainment of the goal of equality, and the low degree of interaction between education and employment. Thus, decentralization of education systems began even before the deep economic recession and the spread of neo-liberalism in the Nordic countries. If speculation is permitted, under conditions of high and sustained economic growth, decentralization could have led to quite a different result than under slump conditions.

In any event, first in Denmark in the 1980s and in Finland and Sweden in the 1990s, the economic crisis resulted in cuts in welfare services and education. For example in Finland, it has been seriously suggested that the country is no longer a welfare state, due to cuts in social expenditure and reorganization. Iceland and Norway have largely been spared them, mainly due to their own energy resources. There, too, more or less neo-liberalistic doctrines of New Managerialism, steering and budgeting by results, evaluation of schools, privatization and commercialization have made a breakthrough (Johannesson, Geirsdottir & Finnbogason 2002; Lindblad, Lundahl, Lindgren & Zackari 2002; Simola, Rinne & Kivirauma 2002). This has happened regardless of the fact that popular support of the welfare state has remained high or increased. The period from 1995 could, then, be characterized as an age of restructuring. For example in Finland, it has meant closure of thousands of small schools and acceptance of tracking as an unofficial practice.

TOWARDS AN INNOVATIVE SOCIETY?

In the 1990s, the debate on information society or knowledge-based economy and globalization has been furious. Globalization has become reality at least as regional economic integration in North America and Europe. By standardizing the regulations of economic activity within its area, the European Union has endeavoured to counteract the advantage gained by the United States in economic competition. The Nordic countries have approached and committed to the EU in different ways, but in all events they have been forced to react to economic competition. In fact, they have coped surprisingly well. What is the reason of their success? Benner (2003, 146) summarizes it as follows:

On the whole, the development of the Scandinavian countries confirms Garrett’s (1998) assertion that countries based on ‘social democratic corporatism’ succeed in a globalized economy precisely because they are able to implement wage-restraint programmes, deliver social stability even with volatile markets, and provide the economy with collective goods, such as productive policies for regional, knowledge-intensive development, support of technology transfer, innovation systems, etc.

In the post-1980s period, the welfare state has transformed in the direction of ‘competition state’ (Streeck 1998, 180-186; Kettunen 2004, 290-291). The concept implies that the state still plays a crucial role, and at the same time globalization means a profound change in the methods states employ. There is not, however, a single but various competition state strategies. One of them is called a ‘shielders’ strategy’ by Palan and Abbott (1999, 103-120). It is applied especially in small Western countries, like the Nordic countries, and characterized by a ‘dualist economy’. An
openness to and thus dependence on world markets in some sectors, like in electronics in Finland (or should I say in the Nokia Mobile Valley), is combined with the protection of some other nationally highly-valued sectors.

Kettunen (2004, 291) argues that the ‘shielders’ strategy’ faces three major problems. One is an increasing asymmetry between capital and labour, second is a diminishing ability of a nation-state to preserve selectively sheltered sectors in its economy, and the third problem is the fate of egalitarian values and social solidarity. This change, naturally, also concerns education.

At least in Finland, of the ‘collective goods’ listed by Benner, the most important is the national innovation system. The concept was probably used for the first time to explain Japan’s economic success in the 1980s (Miettinen 2002, 40-41). Lundvall (1992) took the concept of knowledge as the starting point of his economic theory, and for him ‘the most fundamental resource in modern economy is knowledge, and, accordingly, the most important process is learning’. In the Finnish Government agenda, the National Innovation System is defined as “a domain for interaction in the production and utilization of knowledge and know-how built on co-operation between all producers and users of new knowledge” (Science and Technology Council of Finland 2000). Education, too, is included in the innovation system, alongside technology, research, finance and management. Firstly, it favours comprehensive education and deems it important that the proportion of science- and technology-related school subjects is high. Secondly, universities and polytechnics are actually a part of the innovation systems of their areas. Admittedly, e.g. universities are left with also the traditional academic research and teaching function, in addition to the research and function of promoting professional training, linked to the innovation system (Vartiainen & Viiri 2005).

From a broader comparative point of view, Castells and Himanen (2002) state that Finland has uniquely created a ‘virtuous cycle’: the successful information society makes the continued financing of the welfare state possible and the welfare state generates well-educated people in good health for the information society. A peculiar national identity is the third element of this mixture of the knowledge society (Castells & Himanen 2002). In many respects, the Finnish model of a welfare society they present looks as much Swedish or Scandinavian as Finnish. From the point of view of social organization, informational societies are network societies:

> Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture. (Castells 1996, 469.)

This is also the case in education. Schools, colleges and universities are establishing partnerships with each other and with actors like companies, employers and unions, citizens’ associations and so on, both locally and globally. Education is more dependent on the development of working life and civil society and in turn education has an impact on the organization of work and civil society by providing ‘legitimising accounts of knowledge and skills required from citizens and of foundations of social systems’ (Meyer, 1977, 72). This is my interpretation. Thus, it remains to be seen whether social solidarity and welfare state will endure under the pressure of economic unification and production of innovations.

CONCLUSIONS

I have attempted to answer the following questions: Does a Nordic or Scandinavian model of education exist? What is its form? What are its links to the rest of society? To what degree is the supposed model the result of conscious ideology?
I argue that I have found values or aims that have guided development of education. They are democracy, equality, progressiveness and pragmatism. Social democracy, both as political movement and broader ideology, has had a crucial impact. The comprehensive school model has influenced both nationally all levels and forms of education and internationally development of education systems of other countries. The Nordic culture and lifestyle have provided a good basis for lifelong and lifewide learning, before it became general rhetoric.

However, the Nordic education model can only be referred to as an ideal type. In reality, the national education systems of the Nordic countries have differed in many respects. Instead of a model, there are models or just patterns. Furthermore, education systems in different parts of the world have become ever more uniform, in common with science and technology.

Nordic education systems are a part of the Nordic welfare state. Their second social precondition is the Nordic labour market model, and the third, if not the most fundamental, sustained economic growth. In order to create it, since the 1990s such means as national innovation policies and innovation systems have been employed. The crises of international economic development since the 1970s have impaired the welfare state and the foundations of welfare policies. The spread of neo-liberalism either as an ideology or application of methods it contains as technical solutions is currently changing education policies and education systems. The economic integration of Europe is also leading to educational integration. Thus, one of the key questions is the value attached in Europe to the Nordic model in the most general sense of the concept, or as a social policy and ideology typical of these countries.

NOTES

(1) I have used the words ‘Scandinavian’ and ‘Nordic’ as synonyms, unless specifically indicated otherwise. I make the assumption that in addition to geography, the Nordic countries are united by natural conditions and culture. Naturally, culture and language vary. Finnish does not belong to the European family of languages, and the Sami culture differs most distinctly from the other national cultures.

(2) As Torres and Antikainen (2003, 3-4) point out, even in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, the expansion and differentiation of education took place in states aspiring to resemble welfare states.

REFERENCES


