

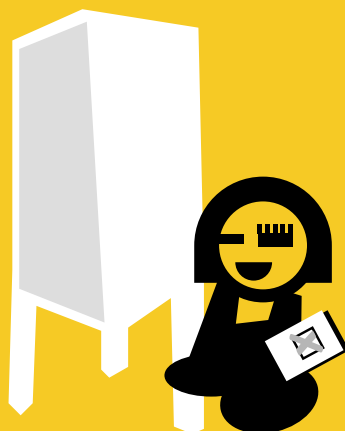
Introduction

This is a short presentation of report no 210 by Skolverket, The National Agency for Education. The report is called *Youth and democracy* and it is an account of the democratic skills of Swedish pupils in comprehensive school. The purpose of the study has been to map and analyse young people's knowledge, attitudes, value systems and engagement in democracy and issues of society. The study is part of a corresponding international study, The IEA Civic Education Study.

Issues of democracy have been top priority on the political agenda during the last decade. Sweden is no exception in that matter. There is a concern about the citizens' declining interest in political participation and engagement. Therefore there is also an interest in how young people relate to these matters.

During the last fifty years school has had an important responsibility in society in teaching citizenship and democracy to new generations. Today the meaning of this responsibility is that school should give all young people the knowledge and skills they will need as grown citizens to be able to participate in the democracy. But the meaning is also that school itself should function as a democratic environment. Even though democratic skills are something young people acquire both in and out of school, school is still an important link to forming future society. Therefore there is all the reason to pay attention to this part of school's responsibility.

That is also the purpose of the report *Youth and democracy*, which is the first one of two reports, about school's responsibility in society.



A presentation of the survey Youth and democracy

Youth and democracy is a Swedish survey that intends to map and analyse young people's knowledge, attitudes, value systems and engagement in matters of democracy and society. The purpose is also to gain knowledge about school's task to educate pupils in the spirit of democracy.

The survey is part of a larger, international study, The IEA Civic Education Study. The International Association for Educational Achievement (IEA) is an independent research institute with over fifty member countries. The survey is based on results and analyses from an inquiry aimed at 14- to 15-year-olds in 28 countries around the world. The inquiry consists of knowledge-, background and attitude questions about matters of democracy and society. The purpose of the different types of questions is to cover many different aspects of democratic skills. The questions touch upon, apart from knowledge about issues of democracy and society, young people's views on public institutions, their faith in politicians and channels, their acceptance of different minorities and their attitude towards women's rights in society. The survey gives information both about young people's school situation and their life situation in general.

A representative selection of Swedish secondary schools was made for the study. The selection resulted in 150 schools and out of these did 138 choose to participate in the survey. For each school was made a random selection of one class or teaching group from year 8 and 9. The class or teaching group had to complete the inquiry in about two hours during an ordinary school day. The headmaster and a selection of teachers also had to complete the inquiry.

What do Swedish 14-year-olds know about democracy and society?

We know, from political science research, that knowledge about democracy and understanding of its fundamental ideas and institutions are very important conditions for participating actively in democracy. Knowledge about democracy is not only important in itself, but it also has favourable influences on people's attitudes and value systems. An important feature of the survey was therefore to find out what the young people know about the fundamental principles of democracy and the rules of the game and whether they understand the purpose of these.

THIS IS HOW THE KNOWLEDGE TEST WAS DEVELOPED

3 000 pupils from year 8 in secondary school during the school year of 1999/2000 completed a knowledge test consisting of 38 questions. The knowledge test is designed to measure two dimensions of knowledge, factual knowledge and ability to interpret. The greater part of the questions, 25 questions, are intended to measure factual knowledge, the remaining 13 questions intend to measure ability to interpret. The factual knowledge questions are designed as multiple choice while the questions that measure ability to interpret are based on different kinds of texts or images that the pupils have to decide on.

WHAT DO THE PUPILS KNOW?

Society and democracy is a large field of knowledge. Therefore have all 38 questions in the knowledge test been brought together to eight different fields. Each field can be regarded as important knowledge about democracy. A few examples of the fields are *The fundamental meaning of democracy*, *Equality and human rights* and *Democracy and economy*.

When you look at how the answers are distributed among the eight fields a knowledge identity of the pupils appears. *The fundamental meaning of democracy* appears to be the field the pupils master the best. The number of pupils

that answered the questions correctly within this field varies between 82 and 61 percent. 82 percent are able to specify requirements for a law. Nearly two out of three pupils (61 percent) are able to state what makes a necessary condition for a democracy out of four given criteria. The field *Equality and human rights* is another field of knowledge that many pupils master. When it comes to the remaining fields the share of correct answers varies a great deal. As an illustration the fields *Democratic rights and privileges* and *Knowledge about representative democracy* could be mentioned, where the number of correct answers varies between 78 to 42 percent. The great variety of correct answers indicates that the pupils have not yet a uniform conception of the contexts within these fields.

You get a similar result when analysing the questions of factual knowledge in the test. It shows that they are of different characters. Some questions can be characterised as "pure" factual knowledge questions, other demand more understanding or judgement of a specific occurrence. An analyse of the pupils' answers to the different questions shows that the pupils to a greater extent give the right answer to pure factual knowledge questions than to those that require judgement or deeper understanding. The result of the knowledge test can thus be interpreted as such: the pupils have a great deal of factual knowledge, while their understanding or knowledge of issues of democracy in a deeper sense is less developed.

When comparing the pupils' answers to those questions that measure factual knowledge and those measuring ability to interpret the pupils are more successful in questions concerning interpreting texts and images than factual knowledge questions. The explanation is probably that the questions of interpretation are better in capturing occurrences the pupils have their own experience of and therefore are more familiar with.

How do the Swedish pupils' results manage when compared internationally? The result of such a comparison shows that the pupils in the participating countries have fundamental knowledge and skills within the subject field and that the difference between the greater part of the countries is small. The results of the Swedish pupils are congruent with the international average. A comparison between the Nordic neighbour countries shows also that the pupils' results are about the same. Only the Finnish pupils perform better than the other Nordic countries.

INDIVIDUAL VARIATIONS

Within this general image of young people's knowledge there are of course individual variations. Young people are not a homogenous group and the differences depend on gender as well as age and home background.

Girls for example perform better in the knowledge test than boys do. Girls also have better results than boys do in questions of equality and human rights while boys better manage questions about economy.

The pupils' result at the test is also directly related to the amount of books they state are in the home. You can draw the conclusion that pupils' with well educated parents perform significantly better in the knowledge test than those whose parents are less educated.

Another aspect of home background is the ability to master language. The subject field *Society and democracy* treats many occurrences and discussions of a principal matter and often in an abstract kind of language. Understanding language can thus be of importance for the performance in the test. A distribution of the pupils in groups of native Swedish and non-natives shows that pupils that are born in Sweden have significantly better results of the test than pupils who were born in another country.

What attitudes do young people have towards other people's rights?

A basic element in a democracy is the principle of every human's equal value. In the study we have therefore chosen to investigate to what extent Swedish youth accept other people's rights. We have investigated the attitude towards women's rights, their attitudes towards immigrants and their attitude towards racists and people with extreme opinions.

THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In the survey was posed a number of questions to the young people that concerned their idea of women's rights. The young people had to consider whether women should in every way have equal rights as men, whether women should run for elections and participate in governing the country in the same way as men, whether women should stay out of politics, whether men are more entitled to jobs than women, whether men and women should have the same salary for the same work and finally whether men are more qualified to become political leaders than women are.

Most of the young people are positive towards women's rights. Nine out of ten young people think women in every way should have the same rights as men. That opinion has the greatest support. The weakest support is given to women having the same right to work as men when work is short. It is true that every second pupil agrees to this statement but every fourth does not.

THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In the same manner was posed a number of questions to the young people about their attitudes towards immigrants' rights in Sweden. The questions are about what chances immigrants have of keeping their language, what chances their children have of getting education, immigrants' voting in elections, their traditions and lifestyle and more generally about their rights.

Generally the Swedish young people can be characterised as being positive towards immigrants' rights and that they agree with what was stated above. Nine out of ten young people agree with the idea that immigrants' children should have equal chances of getting education as other children. There is thus a strong support for equal rights for immigrants as for everyone else in Sweden and for immigrants' voting in elections. Three out of four young people, an obvious majority, agree with the idea that immigrants should have the opportunity of keeping their traditions and their lifestyle and have the opportunity of keeping their own language.

INDIVIDUAL VARIATIONS

Young people's attitudes towards immigrants' and women's rights in general are consequently positive. The idea that everyone should have equal political and social rights is given the greatest support. Less support is given to the idea of sociocultural rights as well as the right to one's own language or lifestyle. Despite the results being generally positive there are variations among the youth. It is known since long that the parents' education has great importance for the young people's attitudes towards these kinds of issues. Young people with well educated parents are for example more positive towards women's and immigrants' rights. There is also a great difference between boys' and girls' attitudes in these issues. Girls are more positive towards women's and immigrants' rights than boys. There is also a difference in attitudes towards immigrants between young people who were born in Sweden and those born in other countries. The non-native Swedish are more positive towards immigrants' rights than native Swedish young people are. Even though the result is little surprising, it is nevertheless discouraging that it seems so much more difficult

to accept rights for other groups than one's own.

SCHOOL'S INFLUENCE OVER YOUNG PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES

When it comes to young people's set of values school appears to play an important part. The survey shows that the pupils' knowledge about democracy and the pupils' experience of the classroom climate has importance for accepting women's and immigrants' rights. The better the pupils' perform in the democracy knowledge test, the more positive towards women's and immigrants' rights they are. This connection prevails regardless of the pupils' social background. In the same manner does the pupils' opinion of the classroom climate affect their attitude towards women's and immigrants' rights. The more open the pupils experience the classroom climate to be, the more tolerant they are. Also this connection prevails regardless of the pupils' social background.

The results show that the knowledge about democracy the pupils possess as well as how the pupils view the openness in the classroom, that is, how teachers and pupils behave towards one and another, matters largely in what fundamental democratic values the pupils have. How the school functions as a democratic institution is thus important for the democratic skills the pupils acquire.

THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS RACISTS AND PEOPLE WITH EXTREME OPINIONS

The survey also contains questions about constitutional rights and privileges for divergent groups. Questions were asked in the survey whether people with extreme opinions/racists should be allowed to have public meetings in order to secure new members, be teachers in comprehensive school, do military service, spread their message through books, vote in the general elections and form political parties. In Sweden freedom of opinion is in the constitution since it concerns the core of democracy. However, there has been a lively debate during the last few years about the rights for certain extreme groups.

Surveys about adult citizens' support for the rights and privileges show that tolerance is weakest towards people with extreme or racist opin-

ions. Also Swedish young people does not seem to have much tolerance towards people with extreme opinions and racists. The answers show that fewer young people tolerate rights for racists than for people with extreme opinions, this pattern of answers is true no matter what rights are concerned. Voting in the general elections is that which most young people tolerate for these people. A majority of the young people think the groups should be allowed to vote. There is also quite significant tolerance for these kinds of groups' right to do military service. Few young people support the groups' right to form political parties and the groups' right to have public meetings in order to secure new members. It seems hardest to tolerate what is closest to the young people themselves, that is, the right for people with extreme opinions or racists to be teachers in comprehensive school. Only 15 and 12 percent think these groups should be allowed to teach in comprehensive school.

What does democracy mean to Swedish 14- and 15-year-olds?

This section is about 14- and 15-year-olds' views of democracy. Questions have been posed in the survey about what the young people think is good and bad for democracy, what the young people think makes a good citizen, and what the young people think about the state's responsibility. These question fields say something about how democracy is viewed and what image you have of a good society.

VIEWS ON DEMOCRACY

The results show a rather great similarity concerning the idea of what is good and bad for democracy. Especially considering questions about different rights and equality, power, justice and humans' equal value there is great similarity in attitudes towards democracy. The young people think for example that freedom of speech, free elections, freedom of organisation and freedom of demonstration is good for democracy. In a corresponding way they think it is bad for democracy that certain groups should have more power than others, for example that relatives of politicians should be favoured, that rich business managers should influence the government more than others, that only one company should own all newspapers.

There is less accordance in questions of economic equality, for example that everyone should be guaranteed a minimal standard of living and that the differences in income and wealth should be small between poor and rich and about the state's control over newspapers. Nor are the young people agreed on the duty of the youth to participate in activities that are positive for society or whether it is good that people refuse to obey a law that violates human rights.

Summing up the results the young people show a relatively good comprehension of many of the fundamental democratic values, such as freedom, justice and equality. To a great extent the young people are agreed on such rather

uncontroversial values being positive for democracy. There is less accordance around statements that are ideologically influenced, for example the control of the state, economic equality and civil disobedience. Questions where the Swedish political left-right wing dimension is evident the unanimity between the young people is, hardly surprising, much less.

VIEWS ON GOOD CITIZENSHIP

The difficult question of what democracy really means is also strongly connected to what role the citizens are assumed to play. In *Youth and democracy* a number of questions have been posed about what a good citizen is.

The statement that a good citizen obeys laws has great unanimity. The young people are still quite unanimous about the importance of different activities in citizenship. A rather large majority of the young people consider it important that a good citizen vote in elections, participate in activities that help people in society, participate in activities protecting the environment, participate in activities for human rights and participate in a peaceful protest action against a law that she or he finds unjust. The young people are quite unanimous about the importance of a good citizen working hard. The young people do not consider it important that a good citizen is a member of a political party.

The young people are less agreed on statements about patriotism and respect for political leaders. This is also true for statements about whether you are prepared to violate a law that offends human rights or the importance of following the political debate in the media or participating in political discussions.

Once again do the ideas of the young people mirror rather conventional ideas of what is more or less important in a good citizenship. The young people are agreed on behaviour and activities that we would expect many citizens to be agreed

on in general, such as the importance of obeying laws, voting and actively working for the environment and human rights. They are less agreed on ideologically coloured contents of citizenship, such as patriotism.

Most striking is the small significance of two traditionally very important parts of democratic citizenship, that is, participating in political discussions and being a member of a political party. There seems to be a pattern among the young people, in which many of those things we traditionally associate with democratic citizenship are seen as less important and in which activities of a so called new political kind or activities in so called new social movements, are viewed as much more important.

VIEWS ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATE

How democracy and the good society is viewed also affects how you view the responsibility of the state. What should the state do for the citizens and what is beyond the state's responsibility?

The young people were asked in the survey how they regard the responsibility of the state in twelve different fields.

There is a high degree of unanimity about what kind of responsibility the state should have. Most of the statements have a large majority of pupils that consider each field to be within the responsibility of the state. The statements treat partly economic responsibility and material welfare, partly what we in the survey have chosen to call a humanistic responsibility, which concerns peace, equality and environmental matters. From a Swedish point of view many of these fields of responsibility are quite uncontroversial statements.

There is less accordance when it comes to ideologically influenced statements. In Swedish politics, and accordingly with Swedish youth, there exists greater disagreement considering what kind of responsibility that the state has in matters such as equality, environment, income equality and support to business. The young people agree the least on what type of responsibility the state should have concerning encouraging people's honesty and moral acting.

In general it is true that 14- and 15-year-olds show logic and consequent patterns of thoughts concerning democracy, citizenship and responsibility of the state. They show a good under-

standing of many of those values that are seen as fundamental in modern democracies. Their views in this field are not unlike adult citizens' and they also seem coloured by the existing political culture already.

INDIVIDUAL VARIATIONS

There are also individual variations in the young people's view of what is favourable and what is unfavourable to democracy. Gender, age and home environment play a great part in these matters, especially when attitudes are an expression for ability to understand the principles of democracy rather than pure values and ideologies. School matters have also great importance all through, matters such as the pupils' knowledge about democracy and their experience of the classroom climate. School also plays a part in forming value systems but it depends on to what extent school is able to influence how much knowledge the pupils have about democracy and how the pupils view the openness in the classroom.

The democratic working day at school

In the survey we have also posed questions whether the young people's working day is characteristic of democracy and whether they think of school as being democratic. The national curriculum for comprehensive school, Lpo 94, was the starting point for this part of the survey. In it is written: The democratic principles of influencing, taking responsibility and participating shall include all pupils. The pupils' development of knowledge and social development implies them to take a greater responsibility for their own work and the school environment and they will also have a real influence on the educational profile. According to school law it is the duty of everyone in school to work towards democratic ways of working.

WHAT DO THE PUPILS THINK?

Will school be a better environment if pupils participate in school's work? That is what Swedish pupils believe. In the international study Sweden is among nine of those countries significantly above the international average when it comes to judging participation in school.

What is most striking about the result is that the pupils in general are very positive about exerting influence on school. Nine out of ten pupils agree with these questions: *When pupils cooperate school will improve, School will improve if pupil representatives are chosen to suggest changes in*

the management of school and Pupils that try to influence in groups might have greater influence than those trying on their own. The pattern of answers indicates clearly that the pupils highly appreciate possibilities of influencing.

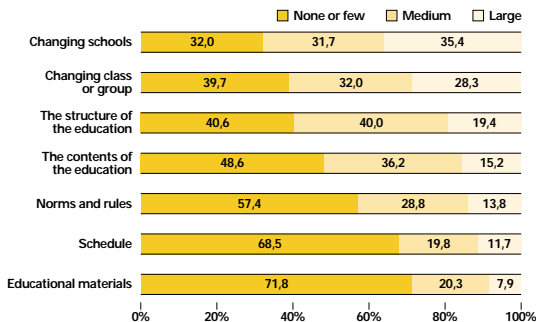
ARE THE PUPILS ABLE TO INFLUENCE?

The image is somewhat different when studying the pupils' opinion of what possibilities they have of influencing within different fields. The diagram below shows how the pupils view their own actual possibilities of influencing and change their situation within a number of important fields in school.

As shown do the pupils view possibilities of influencing differently depending on what the question concerns. About 50 per cent of the pupils think they have large or rather large possibilities of influencing the contents of the education and its structure and also what rules and norms should prevail in their own class. Only three out of ten pupils think they can affect organisational circumstances such as schedule and educational materials. The pupils think they have best chances to a change by changing schools or class.

INDIVIDUAL VARIATIONS

Some differences between different groups of pupils appear when the pattern of answers is studied from different background aspects such as gender, ethnicity, studying motivation, form of school and sociocultural background. Girls for example state that they can affect norms and rules of the school to a higher extent, while boys think they foremost can influence choice of educational materials. Non-native Swedish pupils think, to a greater extent than pupils born in Sweden, that they can affect the contents of the education and its structure, choice of educational materials, schedule and also norms and rules of the school. A possible explanation could be that pupils with own experience of foreign



school environment think of the Swedish pupils' chances to participation in school as better than their own previous school.

DO THE PUPILS WANT TO INFLUENCE?

The pupils had to decide on the question *To what extent do you think you have had reason to be discontent with your school?* The answers were mainly positive, only every 5th pupil claimed to be discontent with his/her school. In other words, two fifths are satisfied, one fifth discontent and the remaining two fifths are neither content nor discontent.

Thereafter the pupils had to state whether they had initiated any change. All pupils were asked to give an answer, both those who were satisfied and those who were less satisfied.

The result shows that nearly half of the pupils (43 per cent) in year 8 and 9 have taken initiative to improving their school. One third of those who had taken the initiative to improving school were satisfied with the result of the improvement. A few more, more than on third, had not yet seen any results of their initiatives while the remaining third were dissatisfied with the result. In other words, more than one third had got a result of their initiatives and thereby they had acquired a positive experience to have with them in life.

How did the pupils proceed when trying to bring about a change? Questions are also asked in the inquiry about how or in what way they tried to change their school situation. The greater part of the pupils tried influencing or changing a point at issue informally through the headmaster or a teacher. A minority chose to go via a board of classes or board of pupils.

THE PUPILS' OPINION OF THE CLASSROOM CLIMATE

In the survey we shed light on the openness in the classroom by posing a number of questions to the pupils about the talk and discussion in the classroom. Through the questions we try in different ways to get an idea of how the pupils reflect on their possibilities of expressing their opinions and to have them respected by teachers and classmates. Some questions are about how or in what way the teaching has its basis in the discussion, talk and reflection.

Six of the questions have been brought

together to an internationally comparable scale with the title *Classroom climate open for discussions*. In this international comparison Sweden is well above average when it comes to classroom climate. Other countries that also are above average on this scale are Norway, Germany, Poland, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, USA, Colombia and Chile.

The Swedish pupils' answers have also been studied from different background aspects. We have chosen to present the differences by stating the amount of pupils in each group that have given a positive or less positive answer to the six questions belonging to the question scale. Pupils whose total answer value is above the median are considered more positive, pupils whose answer value is below are considered less positive. The result shows that girls and boys view the educational environment in the classroom differently. 57 percent of the girls, compared to 44 percent of the boys, feel that the educational environment in history class and social science class allows openness and discussions. A clear majority of pupils inclined to study – *inclined to study* has in this case been indicated as expected future level of education – experience the classroom climate to be open and allowing. Only slightly more than one third of the pupils counting on finishing after upper secondary school think of the classroom climate as open and allowing. A corresponding pattern is true when comparing pupils from a socioculturally stronger and pupils from a socioculturally weaker home environment.

The climate for discussions can be described as good in the Swedish classrooms. Most of the pupils, around four fifths, feel free to express their opinions in the classroom, regardless of whether these deviate from what the teacher or the other pupils think. They feel respected and encouraged to have their own opinion in different matters. This must be seen as a positive result. The problem is that one fifth do not experience this kind of support. This is true especially for pupils who are not particularly inclined to study. Their experience is that they seldom or never have been treated in a respectful and encouraging manner in the classroom. Boys are over-represented in that group.

How can the existing differences be understood?

So far this account has only concerned the survey's results of the pupils' knowledge, attitudes and value systems. This result has been interpreted by the aid of a number of background variables that can give explanations at an individual level. However, the variations in the result can not be understood with these data only. Other circumstances that affect the results must be considered to get a complete picture of what we call young people's democratic skills in the survey.

In order to increase the understanding of the results a number of case studies have been carried out by *Youth and democracy*. These case studies focus on the norms and value systems of the local society as well as those of the classroom and the school. The basis of this view is that school, as part of the local society, also accommodates the norms and value systems of the local society. The case studies are meant to find out how the democracy responsibility is expressed in the different schools and how these expressions could be understood.

SCHOOL AS A DEMOCRATIC ENVIRONMENT

There is an organised representative system of pupils' influence and responsibility in several case study schools. The system consists of two parts: a board of pupils that covers the whole school or parts of it and a board of classes or similar at class or group level. There are explicit ideas about what the board of pupils should be dedicated to, both among teachers and pupils, but without in fact having had any discussion about it. Tradition, what the board of pupils usually is dedicated to, has certain importance. These ideas about what the board of pupils should do revolve round matters such as the external environment – the school yard – or making the school cosy, thus matters that are not directly related to education. What authority a board of pupils and other representative fora have and how the pupils' formal influence relate to how

decision-making is structured at school is something that has never been discussed. Matters related to education are instead handled informally between pupil and teacher or between pupil and headmaster. Regardless of whether formal methods work or not, there is both among pupils and teachers a notion that the board of pupils does not give pupils real influence. The formal influence is thus a question about a lot more than formal structures.

To a great extent it is a question of views on pupils, knowledge and the values systems that characterise the school's work. In those schools lacking a mutual conception in these matters pupils do not get the support that would be demanded to estimate their influence as real influence. However, in some cases the lack of a functioning board of pupils does not matter at all to the pupils. These pupils either have no expectations on a board of pupils or have a close and trusting relationship with the adults in school and thereby are able to convey their opinions informally. In other cases the difference is great between expected and actual influence, especially if the pupils have no informal channels as well.

Also concerning the pupils' influence on their work situation it is fundamental to what degree there is some kind of community of values in the school and to what extent it starts working in the teaching. We can state that the subject of teaching has importance and that there are great differences between different groups of teachers in that matter. We can also state that these differences are related to each specific teacher and his or her ideas of the meaning of being a teacher, ideas about how pupils learn, ideas about his or her own subject and so on.

Except for what was just said, it is of course important to consider a number of structural matters when it comes to pupils' possibilities of influencing; constitution of pupils, class- or

group size. Depending on whether these matters are positive or negative are they favourable or unfavourable to the influence of pupils.

Between the case study schools there are thus similarities and differences in how pupils' influence is structured. These similarities and differences have different characters and can be understood within two different contexts. Firstly, the inner environment of the school, for instance whether there exists a community of values or not. Secondly, the way the local society affects the democratic responsibility of the school. The views on democracy that permeates the local society and for instance is expressed in the municipal school plan, are also part of the school environment. What aspect of the views on democracy that is stressed has direct consequences to how important the questions of value will be in the school. Here follows a short account of the results from two of the case studies to make this explicit.

ALE MUNICIPALITY

The school at Ale, both the school system as a whole and the case study school, is experiencing an organisational phase of change that aims to create a distinct organisation with clarified ways of decision-making. To politicians/administration this means trying to combine a great deal of independence for the different administration units with a high degree of control. This pattern is true also for the case study school. The organisation has been built up round independent work teams where the headmaster is thought to be the visionary, the person that runs the work in a certain direction and thereby also runs the school with a firm hand. The organisational structure is in both cases superior to questions of contents of the work. Despite this, they realise the importance of discussing the questions of contents to be able to reach mutual views and mutual ideas about the direction of the work and what values systems it should be based on. As far as the municipality is concerned these mutual ideas are formulated in the school plan, for the case study school's part they are formulated in the local work plan. The school staff does not yet embrace the mutual ideas as a whole. The consequence of what has been described is that concerning the pupils' formal

influence, via a board of classes and a board of pupils, does the organisational structure exist and partly function. But, the questions of contents, what the pupils should be able to influence, have not been discussed. This is even more evident regarding the pupils' informal influence where the degree of possibilities of influencing is dependent on the particular teacher's views on this.

LIDINGÖ MUNICIPALITY

The political management of the school on Lidingö can be described as non-management. Politicians set conditions and limits for the school's work and then let the professionals carry through with it. It is up to each citizen to decide on available alternatives based on his/her own opinion of what is most favourable to the specific individual. Thereby the politicians play an unobtrusive role and they do not communicate with the work of the school other than through the political message in the school plan. The case study school is run in a similar way, with a great deal of independence for the work teams and without a leadership that runs the work in a certain direction. The management culture that is practised in the municipality lacks a mutual interpretation and a uniform way of relating to the democratic responsibility of the school. This is left for the teachers to handle and the pupil's influence is largely an informal influence connected to the particular individual. That the influence of the pupil is expressed in this way agrees with how the teaching is aimed at knowledge and results, provided that the influence has a positive effect on the pupils' results.

School as a democratic project – concluding discussion

School has a pronounced responsibility in society. The meaning of this responsibility is to prepare young people for participation in political, cultural and social issues. The democratic responsibility of school, to transfer democratic skills to the next generation, is huge, extensive and complex. The account that has been presented makes you ask the question whether school has fulfilled this task, are young people provided with the knowledge and the skills that society will demand of them?

To start with, there is all the reason to emphasize that the democratic responsibility looks to the future. The knowledge and skills that young people get in school will be applied in the future, a future that they probably think of as remote. We do not know whether there will be any connection between the democratic skills they have shown here and their future acting. What we do know and what the survey has shown, is that school is very important, not only to young people's knowledge about democracy and issues of society, but also to their values systems and attitudes. Therefore there is all the reason to view the results of the survey as positive, especially considering that the young people in this survey are 14 and 15-years-old. Thus there remains several years of education until they leave school and the influence of school.

But it is also important to put the results within their context, to focus the conditions of the responsibility and the schools' possibilities of solving this. How well are the achievements of the democratic responsibility articulated by the state and what possibilities do the schools have of taking this into consideration, with regard to other tasks? What are the conditions of realising the democratic responsibility in daily life?

Starting with the responsibility itself we can state that the responsibility formulated in the national curriculum is a political responsibility aimed at the headman of the school, politicians and administration and to those who will carry

through with the work, headmasters and teachers. By tradition the political parties have been quite agreed on the national curriculum. That means that the writings in the national curriculum are a political compromise, a smallest common denominator, which the parties have been able to agree on. That also means that the responsibility is not unambiguously formulated. Its purpose and meaning can be interpreted in different ways. It is thus not obvious what the state wants to achieve with the responsibility. During time the contents of the responsibility and its form have changed as the values systems of society have changed.

The current management of the municipality and the particular school have the right to interpret. If and how the municipality interprets the responsibility, and thereby what should be given priority, is directly related to the local society's views on democracy and its norms and values systems. But it is of course also a matter of how the municipality views the responsibility in society in relation to the other responsibilities of school, especially the responsibility of knowledge. The responsibility of knowledge is both more articulate and furthermore the state also raises explicit demands on results from the municipalities.

Teachers and leaders of the school are responsible for how the policies in the national curriculum are realised in the methods used in schools. Regardless of existing guidelines in the school plan for how to practise the policies, the result is still affected by the conditions that exist in each particular school, conditions that consist of both structural matters as well as the teachers' ideas about what is feasible. But what matters the most is whether the school's staff embraces mutual views and ideas when interpreting the responsibility of the school and that these also characterise the contents of the school's work and how it is formed.