

## A. Seminar on **Upper Secondary Schools**

**Moderator: Aðalheiður Steingrimsdóttir**

**Secretary: Steinunn Inga Óttarsdóttir**

### Participants

#### Main conclusions:

It is a problem that teachers are leaving the profession within 5 years in many countries. Mixed cultures, like vocational teachers and general subject schools, tend to make separate groups in Iceland, which has to be taken into consideration when speaking of **collaboration**. Different education under the same roof is okay but the needs are not the same. Good point was made about the old experienced teachers that need special attention but seldom get it. More **time** is needed in school to develop culture for reflection, in Norway there is a strike because authorities want teachers to stay all the working hours in the school, like recently in Denmark. There is a lack of **trust**, all agree on that.

„Business capital“ in education seems to be a common approach in Norway and Denmark. Teacher education is a master degree now in most northern countries. How do we get good students entering the teacher education in Iceland? Should teachers talk about their profession to the students to promote the teachers profession? Show them that you are a good professional teacher that loves his /her work.

First year support is needed for new teachers . Assessment is very different, between schools. It's a weak side of the upper secondary system in Iceland. How would we like to assess teachers? The new emphasis on technology fashion (iPad) is not going to save the school system. More means to implementation are needed. In the municipalities there is a **gap** between the words in the policy and implementation in the field. We miss something systematical on lifetime education and ongoing professional development within working hours. There is a lack of more initial training. Increase use of research of teachers themselves. Good point about futile quick solutions that don't work! Good remark on how long it takes to be a good judge of teaching, to learn to be in the zone!

Let's discuss the role of the teaching profession in promoting more respect and self-respect and empowering the teachers' identity:

Twenty years ago discussion on respect was very lively. In Norway there is a feeling for being able to influence policy makers. Despite we have similar canals in Iceland this is not the case here. The teachers' profession has developed enormously in the last years and the influences come from the outside, like PISA and rapid technology changes. Respect comes from working with civic awareness in the classroom, that's for sure. Teachers and their profession are pressed from many angles/directions?. Their role had to change, it's automatically different from the predecessors forty

years ago. It was never an option to keep it unchanged. Changes in a society affect school enormously. Demands must, however, be categorized and prioritized. What are the crossroads when we come to think of it? Many contradictory things, for example in the civic education Sigrún talked about - is the school a very democratic institution? Autonomy is a big issue also. Using democratic methods in the classroom is maybe the first step, even though you don't have any other influence in the school. Necessary to cooperate with colleagues and reflect on how we teach. Ethical platform, not rules, teachers need to increase self-respect and respect for one another, there is a multicultural society both in class and in the work place too. Do we need new kind of support? Is the students' voice stronger now than before? That is not the case when we look at the curriculum and teaching methods at least. All is up to individual teachers. In Norway there are the same national questions asked in all schools about motivation, teachers and mobbing?. Democracy has been the same the last 10 years in Norway because of the good channels?. New bureaucracy lessens the influence of each individual. It's very time consuming to satisfy all demands, many teachers complain about not having time to reflect. Lately there are more and more forms to be filled, reports to be made and so on.

Professional development and leadership, who are the leaders? The teacher in his profession or the school administrator? Take up leadership apart from which job you are in. In Upper secondary schools there are many ways of leadership, tasks are delegated, teams have to be established, and leadership is understood in many ways. School masters have to focus too much on the money. Who is interested in the teachers' knowledge? This is a necessary point, for example in the implement.

Nordic cooperation on teachers' issues hasn't been very influential, is not at all strong. Why is that? Perhaps because Nordic model isn't like the OECD policy. Maybe we think we are more alike, but we really don't know our neighbors at all. Is the Icelandic education system more like the European way than the Nordic way, as shown in the slides? Do we put competition, quick solutions and standardization in front of creativity? The most important issues in the lecture are our Nordic values and global policy and the contradiction between them.

Questions for the panel:

The GERM-slide, why are we not more affected by the GERM, what are Stahlberg's reasons for not including the Nordic countries in the GERM, except for the small Swedish dot?

How does Sahlberg want us to strengthen the cooperation and exchange experiences, by unions, by politicians, where is the systematic flow of influences, like in strategies and such? How can we be really familiar with the changes in the other Nordic countries? A common policy document, built on real exchange cooperation?

How do we enhance the values of the profession, developing the profession on Nordic grounds.

The conference has awakened more questions than answers, many reflections. Both Hargreaves and Sahlberg talk like we do in the Icelandic Teachers Union so we are doing something right, heading in the right direction, hopefully.

## **The Seminar report**