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The Teaching of Drawing and Art in SwedenBy: Arne Larsson, Art Teacher, Västerås;
Secretary, Swedish Association of Art Teachers.

Drawing was introduced into the Swedish High Schools as an independent subject about 1860. Features essentially characteristic of those early days still remain.

In an official investigation of the teaching of drawing made in 1858, the following statement appears:

"Undoubtedly, drawing should occupy a prominent place among the subjects taught in school. The instruction will develop the pupil's sense of beauty, strengthen his thinking faculty and provide him with a skill which he will be in need in his future career.

For young people who want to enter an industrial profession training in drawing is not only good, but so necessary that it might be compared with and valued as highly as that in writing".

In fact, this view became characteristic of the age of industrialization which was then beginning. To those in official authority, the importance of technical drawing was still in the 1920's the only argument which justified the increase in expenditure on the teaching of drawing demanded by the developing high school system. It is reasonable to suppose that such utilitarian points of view will always be strongly asserted.

Art education became a school subject by mere chance, aided by its "grown-up brother", technical drawing. Since then it has been constantly gaining support and is now in a more favourable position, perhaps, than practical drawing.

Art has had to and will have to contend with great difficulties. It will have to live a parasitic life upon the tree of "useful" knowledge.

At present the concept of the Swedish school is becoming broader and the system is undergoing some reorganization. In 1950 the Riksdag (Parliament)

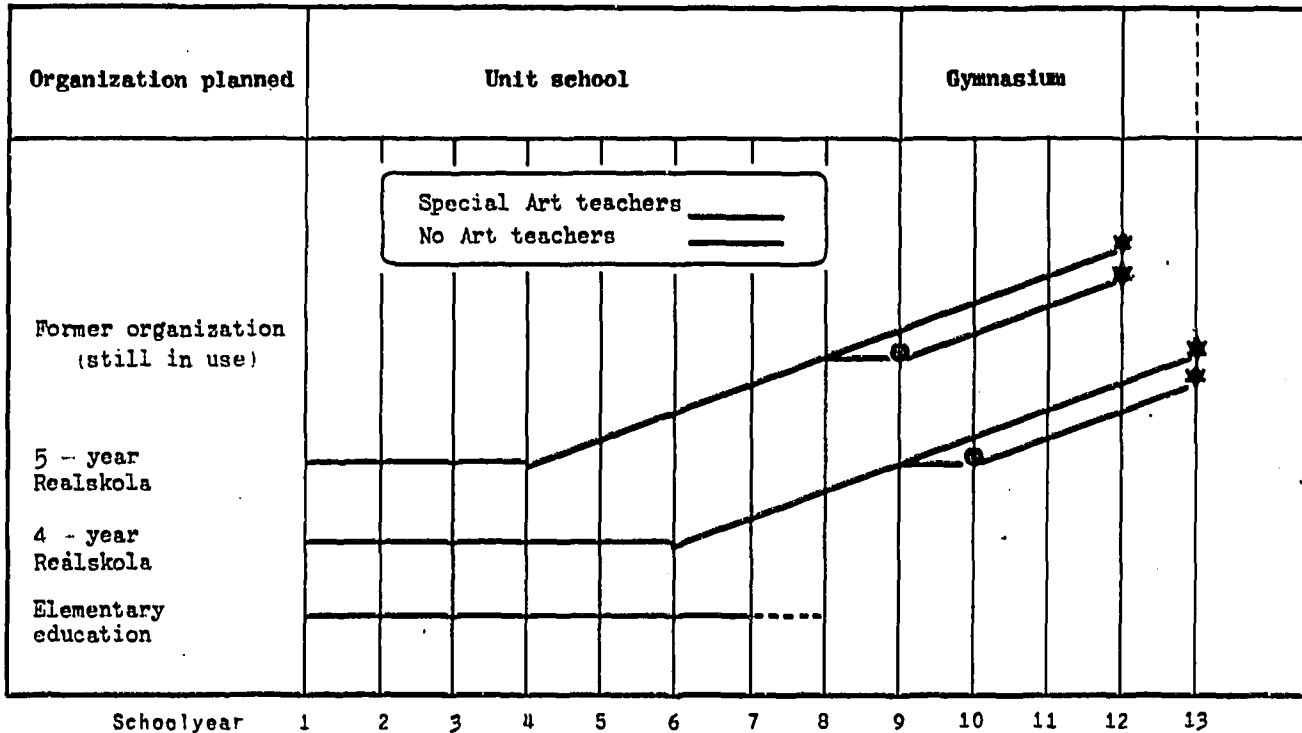
resolved that compulsory education should comprise 9 years, so as to include the existing Realskolan (Middle School).

There is a link between the Enhetskola (Unit School) and the Gymnasiet (Upper School). From the gymnasiet students can enter a university or a specializing college.

Drawing and Art Education are taught as an independent subject from the 4th school year to the highest form of Gymnasiet (Upper School).

The educational system aims at giving the scholars a certain practical technical ability in drawing as well as art education.

GENERAL PLAN OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN SWEDEN



* Matriculation examination

● Lower certificate examination

Practical Drawing

Practical drawing, which includes everything serving practical aims, is clear and simple. It is related to general schoolwork as a general descriptive and explanatory form of expression. It cannot and should not be isolated from the field in which it is to be applied.

The school is organized so that this subject comes within the Art teacher's sphere to a very limited extent, and then chiefly as technical drawing.

Practical drawing as used in elementary education, however, often approaches art education, e.g. drawing used to illustrate the first instruction in regional studies, in geography and history.

Art Education

Art education should be related to the individual's characteristics and his basic instincts. All children should be considered equally worthwhile, equally intelligent. Everyone should be allowed to develop along individual lines.

The purpose of art education up to the age of 12 years is chiefly to make the child free and allow it to express itself in pictures in its own way. Otherwise no lasting results can be achieved.

Hesitation at giving expression to something has its origin in the same undeveloped and obscure ideas that are often found amongst primitive peoples who, for example, refuse to reveal their names. The child is vaguely conscious of revealing something of itself in a picture, and is afraid of being criticized. The teacher must be sympathetic and should accept and deal with the child at its own level.

For children over 13 years, the aim of art education should be to develop, gradually, the basis for a better conception of art. Pupils gain their experience partly through contacts with art and crafts, partly through creative work.

Conditions under which drawing and art education are taught

During the first 4, 6 or 8 school years (see table above.) the "form master" system is used, i.e. one teacher gives instruction in all the different subjects and follows the class year by year. In the higher schools, however, there are specialized teachers who give instruction in one, two or three subjects.

The form master system has great educational advantages. The teacher has a chance to learn to know his pupils individually, which enables him to give each pupil the most suitable work and to follow his development.

Art teachers, like the other teachers of special subjects, have more difficulty in getting to know the pupils. It is not a question only of learning their names, but of knowing their type of character, their reactions and sensitiveness to criticism and influence. Without such knowledge the art teacher can only work gropingly and tentatively. It would therefore be most valuable for the art teacher to become acquainted with his pupils at an early age, when that open-heartedness and frankness which is characteristic of children below the age of 13, still remains.

In the existing 5-year Realskola the first two years provide an invaluable opportunity for establishing close relations between pupils and teacher. In the first class of the 4-year Realskola the teacher has to work under great disadvantages because the pupils are then going through a phase of introversion. The consequences of this as regards art education will also be evident in the years following.

As a rule two lessons a week have been given in drawing and art education. At present schoolwork in high schools is being reduced, which also affects drawing and art education. Naturally, in deciding the proportion of the time-table to be given to this subject its value in relation to other subjects must be considered. It is also important to see that the average pupil is given time enough to manage work suited to his abilities. As a result of teacher experience over several years, two lessons a week are now regarded as a minimum.

The time-table reduction mentioned above will have a disastrous effect (see time-table supplement) and the trial schedule for the new Unit School also shows a rigorous reduction in drawing and art education.

For admission to the Gymnasiet some knowledge of French is required, therefore the best pupils, going on to the Gymnasiet, must attend the required lessons in French and their drawing and art education has had to be reduced.

Consequently the position of art education in the higher schools is not good - the work of the teacher is hard and also is easily rendered ineffective where forms have from 30 to 35 pupils. Altogether the art teacher has to deal with about 500 pupils, in some cases more, in others less. To be successful in his task the teacher ought to have more time and fewer pupils. The authorities, however, are completely unsympathetic to such a claim.

As is evident from the survey of public education given above, the higher school leads to a school-leaving examination. In all subjects marks are given, but the marks in drawing and art education are not recognized as qualifications for an examination, nor for promotion. This of course means that the pupils, obliged to work for examination subjects, cannot afford to give much attention to art education and that the subject is at an exceptional disadvantage in the school.

Experimental work

There are about 400 art teachers in Sweden almost all of whom are employed in the higher schools. Many of them are carrying on with experimental work with little support from the authorities. During the last few years, however, the Board of Education has started arranging courses and "pedagogical days" to publicize the results of this work.

Yearly exhibitions are held in the schools and the art Teachers' Association to the best of its capacity, tries to stimulate and extend experimental work. This work is mainly in decorative painting and sculpture, both very much limited by the lack of equipment for art rooms. Studies in "How to Design a Home" have also been the subject of such experimental activities. Arrangements have been made for wood-cut, linoleum-cut and similar workshop work as leisure occupation, often through the initiative of the teachers and at their personal sacrifices. Circulating exhibitions of children's paintings are also organized.

In several higher schools Art Societies are active, often directed by art teachers, their main purpose being to acquire original works of art for the school-rooms. The Art Societies also arrange exhibitions in the schools so as to make the pupils more familiar with contemporary art.

The training of art teachers

Elementary school teachers receive a training of two or four years. Drawing is included in this training which is designed partly to develop the teacher's own abilities, partly to explain the method and purpose of drawing and art teaching in school.

Specially trained art teachers receive a training of four or five years, including art and handicrafts as well as pedagogical education in connexion with their special work.

Art inspection

Since 1948 the Board of Education has employed an inspector on a half-time basis who deals with administrative matters as well as leading and directing pedagogical developments.

In rare instances the municipal school districts have regional advisers or specialized teachers for drawing and art education in the elementary schools.

Special art rooms

As primary schools rarely have special art rooms, the teaching generally takes place in the classrooms. The higher schools are almost always provided with art rooms.

Supplement

Time-table I
Former organization

	4-year Gymnasium	3-year Gymnasium	5-year Realskola	4-year Realskola
Number of the class	4 3 2 1	3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	4 3 2 1
Lessons per week	1 1 2 2	1 1 2	2 2 ^x 2 2 2	2 2 ^x 2 2

x In special cases 1 lesson per week for girls.

Time-table II.
Reduction in number of lessons in drawing and art education

	Classical curriculum						5-year. Realskola	4-year Realskola	
	4-year Gymnasium				3-year Gymnasium				
Number of the class	4	3	2	1	3	2	1	5 4 3 2 1	4 3 2 1
Lessons per week	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2 ^x ($\frac{2}{1} \frac{b}{g}$) 2 2 2 ^{xx}	2 ^x ($\frac{2}{1} \frac{b}{g}$) 2 2

x For pupils studying French 1 lesson per week.

xx 1 lesson per week during half the school year for practice in handwriting.

b Boys

g Girls

	Non-classical curriculum						
	4-year Gymnasium				3-year Gymnasium		
Number of the class	4	3	2	1	3	2	1
Lessons per week	2	2	1	2	2	2	1