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The Development of Co-Education in Finland during the 19th Century and Some Points of Comparison in Neighboring Countries



This study deals with the development of co-education in Finland during the 19th century and it belongs to the field of the history of education. Some points of comparison are represented about the parallels in Sweden, Estonia, Denmark and Norway.

Co-education is a phenomenon of many dimensions. It was revealed in Finland during the 19th century as various efforts, which were all trying to join together to the same educational wholeness different kinds of elements and groups of pupils in secondary school. In this study the forms of co-education are co-education of ranks, co-education of sexes, vocational co-education, co-education of languages and co-education of nationalities.

In the beginning of the 19th century the Finnish society was divided into four ranks or estates: the nobility, the clergy, the bourgeoisie and the peasantry. The secondary education was originally for the boys of the nobility and the clergy, but from the end of the 18th also the sons of the bourgeoisie and the peasantry began in small scale to be educated in secondary schools.

From the Middle Ages only the boys received official education. The girls' and women's way of life was domestic and private. The thoughts of Enlightenment had

raised discussion about the girls' education as a duty of the society. The education of boys and girls in the same school and classroom is called the education of sexes.

The secondary schools for boys in the beginning of the 19th century in Finland were called trivial schools and gymnasiums. They were of general culture, not for vocational training. The secondary schools were still for the education of priests and officials. At the side of the classical, on Latin based education new schools with a curriculum on modern lines were founded. They did not consist Latin teaching and they were emphasizing particularly natural sciences, modern languages and vernacular. There was a section with modern curriculum founded at the cathedral school of Turku in 1806. It joined together classical and modern education in one educational institution.

In this study the relations of classical and modern education are researched in secondary schools.

When Finland was annexed to Russia as an autonomous state in 1809, the language relations were changed decisively. Under the Swedish regime the education in the secondary schools in Finland was in Swedish language. From 1809 on there were three important languages: Russian, Finnish and Swedish. The Russian emperor promised that the administration and the education would continue using the Swedish language. The efforts to solve the language problems in the secondary schools by letting the language relations to form freely or by connecting several languages to the same educational institution is called *co-education of languages*.

The Finnish autonomy from the year 1809 was national. National goals, Finnish, Swedish as well as Russian met each other in the secondary school reforms. They joined closely to the language problems. The religious co-education is left outside this study.

Theoretically co-education in all its forms was a question of two or more new elements, which were joined to

an already existing structure. The forms of co-education did not develop directly, but they were preceded by a preliminary period, when the new dynamic element was rising to the level, where the combining was possible.

The right to an education was broadened during the 19th century and it went together with the new forms of co-education and their development. Finland was situated on the northern border of Europe on the juncture between Sweden and Russia. The western Swedish educational tradition met in Finland the eastern, both via so called Old Finland received general Russian tradition.

The efforts to make the autonomic Finnish school system uniform began in 1812. They were performed by three Educational Committees. A new educational bill was imposed in 1843, in which the Finnish language was added to the curriculum. Latin remained the basic of the language education. The emphasis on mother tongue layed still on the Swedish language, the political emphasis was tried to move to the Russian language and the scientific emphasis layed on Latin. The natural sciences were also added to the curriculum. The nationality, vernacular or religion of the pupil were not considered as classifying factors. Moreover the rank and the social background of the pupil and his or her sex alike were separating pupils from each other.

The enlarging of the educational program for girls to the secondary schools meant a new conquest in 1843. Three of the girls' schools in the previous province of Viipuri went on with their program and new state schools for girls were founded in Turku and Helsinki. They were all called "Fruentimmersskola". These girls' schools became a model for new girls' schools in Finland. Those Fruentimmersskola schools were meant "... for the girls of civilized and noble parents", they were regulated by distinction of rank. In Viipuri this regulation meant a change, because it was usual in that city, that from

the times of the charina of Russia, Catherine II at the end of the 18th century the schools had been open for all classes of the society.

The rank background of the girls in Viipuri girls' schools 1788-1804 has been researched by Maija Rajainen. According to what she says there were 53 % girls of officials and 35 % girls of bourgeoisie. In this present research the study of the rank background of the girls examined the register of pupils for the years 1828 and 1846. The sum of the girls with bourgeoisie background reached 43 % and with official background went down to 49 % in 1828. In 1846 the part of clerical educators was 24 %. In the Fruntimmersskola school in Turku the groups of girls with official and bourgeoisie background were both 45 %. In Helsinki, the new capital the number of official educators was 61 % and bourgeoisie educators 33 %. There were all together 2.5 % girls of peasant origin.

Different kinds of nationalities and languages were taught together in Viipuri. There were 38 % Swedish, 34 % Russian and 24 % German speaking girls in the Fruntimmersskola school in Viipuri in 1828. The educational situation was changed in Viipuri in 1846 to the direction of the main part of Finland. In the year in question there were 61 % Swedish, 24 % German and 11 % Russian with 4 % Finnish speaking girls in Viipuri. In Helsinki there were 79 % Swedish and 17 % Russian speaking girls. Turku was the most Swedish speaking with 91 % Swedish speaking girls in the Fruntimmersskola school. The education of the girls in the two higher ranks was from 55 % to 65 % and in the two lower ranks from 35 % to 45 %. The education of the girls in lower ranks was increasing.

There was enthusiasm about reforms in modern curriculum in the beginning of the 19th century but from the 1820's the neohumanism and the emphasis on classical languages came instead. Meanwhile, some private

persons had reform activities going on in their own private schools. O.H.Gripenberg and Edvard Bergenheim belonged to that group. Gripenberg had been Pestalozzi's pupil and he used to have co-education in his elementary school in Helsinki. Edvard Bergenheim, later the Archbishop of Finland founded a secondary school with modern curriculum for boys in Turku in 1840. However the school had to be closed in 1844. The time was not ripe for reforms. The third experiment was successful. A lyceum for boys was founded in Helsinki in 1831, it was a whole secondary school system until the maturity examination. The model for this school was Borgerdydskole i Copenhagen. Helsingfors Lyceum was led by young university men, among them J.V.Snellman, J.L.Runeberg and J.J.Nervander. The main ideas for the school were neohumanism and nationalism. Helsingfors Lyceum was also a private school. Private schools were administratively independent during the 1830's. The Russian czar started the regulation and inspection of private schools in the next decade.

The reign of Russian czar Alexander II from 1855 meant a time of new reforms in the Finnish history of education. The school system became uniform and the bureaucracy increased. Every class of the society was going to have a school form of its own. The communal primary school and the state secondary school formed two parallel lines from 1866. Co-education of sexes was developing inside these school forms.

A new school order for secondary schools came in 1856 and it improved the situation of the modern curriculum, while the Latin education was decreased and the Finnish language became a new subject in the secondary school. The girls' education was advanced and many new schools were founded.

The rights to an education were also broadened, and the Finnish language secondary school for boys started

in 1858 and for girls in 1864. The beginning of these schools was realized by the co-education of languages, Swedish and Finnish were used together as teaching languages. The bilingual period was short, it lasted to 1865 and after that the contrast between Swedish and Finnish became sharper.

The school order for secondary schools in 1872 founded the lyceum for boys and the secondary school with modern curriculum with four or two classes. The last mentioned school form did not get much acceptance. The reform in 1883 changed a part of them to lyceums with modern curriculum. The first lyceum for boys with modern curriculum started in 1872 and it was based on mathematics and the Russian language. The lyceum with modern curriculum led to the maturity examination. It made the co-education of sexes possible in secondary school. The possibility of taking part in the maturity examination was under discussion from the 1860's. The traditional education for girls without final examination was approved by the majority and the development led to the co-educational secondary schools for those girls who wanted to take the examination.

The rank limitation for pupils in state girls' schools was left in the school order of 1856. Liberal ideas about the co-education of social classes were realized in the private girls' schools, which were founded without rank limitations. The sum of official and clergy educators of the girls in the state girls' schools in Viipuri and Helsinki in 1866 remained the same as before, but in Turku it had decreased to 38 %. In the beginning of the 1880's the urban bourgeoisie and the Finnish language educators were the growing groups, which educated their girls in girls' schools. Yet the education model for girls was still on the basis of the rank in society.

Alexander III continued the reforms from 1881 on. The co-educational secondary schools in Finland were founded

separately for the Swedish speaking and the Finnish speaking girls. The first Swedish language co-educational secondary school was called "Läroverket för gossar och flickor" and it was founded in Helsinki in 1883. It had eight classes and it led to the maturity examination. The model for it was the first co-educational secondary school in Sweden, Palmgrenska skolan in Stockholm.

The first Finnish language co-educational secondary school was also founded in Helsinki. Its name was "Helsingin Suomalainen Yhteiskoulu" and it was founded in 1886. Models were brought from the co-education in America. Mikael Soininen, later the principal for the school made an excursion to the U.S.A. in 1884-1885.

Before the founding of the first co-educational Finnish language secondary school there was a plan of a Finnish language lyceum for girls and the Finnish women's suffraget movement was organized at the same time. The town of Kuopio and Minna Canth, a writer for women's rights played an important role in the development.

The joining of classical and modern curriculum in the same secondary school happened in Finland from the classical to the direction of the modern. Sections with modern curriculum were founded in classical lyceums in 1890's. During the same period some of the co-educational secondary schools were changed to five classes of secondary schools, first they were called bourgeoisie schools. This new school form became an economic and flexible solution for country towns. Co-education of sexes and curriculums went together but co-education of languages was a separating element. During the 1890's the ideological arguments for co-education of sexes were changed to economic arguments. Also the Finnish national movement took the co-educational secondary schools as its own.

Some points of comparison about the parallels are represented first concerning Swedish school development

during the 19th century. Sweden formed with the educated people in Finland a uniform Swedish language area. The cultural connections between Finland and Sweden and especially Stockholm also existed during the autonomy. In Sweden the co-education of boys and girls in secondary school developed from a manual training school to a complete secondary school. "Palmgrenska skolan" was founded in 1876. It became a model for the first co-educational secondary school in Finland. The Swedish school development was influenced by the Finnish co-educational secondary schools at the end of 1880's. New complete eight year secondary schools based on co-education of sexes were founded in Sweden in 1890's. The Swedish girls' schools were private except one, detached from the boys' schools. The modern curriculum came to the side of the classical curriculum in the first half of the 19th century. The objection against the mastery of latin started earlier in Sweden than in Finland. The Swedish education system lacked contrast between the languages. The slow breaking of the rank society led to the direction of co-education of ranks. This development gathered more strength during the end of the 19th century.

Estonia was a part of the Russian empire like Finland. The school development in Estonia differed from the progress in Finland. The co-education of boys and girls was not realized in Estonia during the period under research, neither was the higher education in Estonian language realized. The education for girls in girls' schools was advanced. There were gymnasiums for girls in Estonia, but entrance for women to the university of Dorpat was not allowed until the beginning of the 20th century. The modern curriculum was used in lower schools detached from classical lyceums.

The Estonian school system was divided into different parts for the education of ranks. There was the opposite

situation between the German intelligentsia in Estonia on one hand and the Russian authorities and the Estonian language peasantry on the other. This difficult situation during the time of Russification at the end of the 19th century emphasized the lack of a national school administration and also pointed out the possibilities for solving the problems that were due to the czar's educational policy. The ideological basis for the Estonian education was traditionally German. The Estonian national movement had contacts with Finland, which was seen as a fore-runner in the way of developing the vernacular higher education.

Denmark had a closer connection to Middle Europe than the other Northern countries. The classical education was in a determinative position in Denmark during the 19th century. Forms of modern curriculum were developing as a part of both secondary school and bourgeoisie school. The struggle between classical and modern curriculum was violent during the 1830's. Girls' schools were private, detached educational institutions. Women received the right to enter the university of Copenhagen in 1875. Co-education of boys and girls began in Denmark in small secondary schools with modern curriculum in the country side, where girls were taken as pupils for economic reasons. Hanna Adler founded in 1892 the first co-educational secondary school which led to the university. There were both classical and modern curriculum used in that school. Denmark was not influenced by the other northern countries, the influences were brought from America. The language question was not significant. The decided division of society by the social classes was preserving the structures of the educational system in Denmark to the 20th century.

The development of co-education in Norway during the 19th century contained more different structures of education than in other Northern countries. After being

detached from Denmark in 1814, Norway began the reforms of its education system with the organizing of public education during the 1830's. The struggle between classical and modern curriculum led to a solution in the middle of the century when the secondary school was divided into lines. In 1869 the classical and modern curriculum were joined together in a new school form, a lower secondary school "middelskole". Private girls' schools formed a detached group of their own. Co-education of sexes happened first in 1884, when girls were permitted to enter the lower secondary schools. Co-education of sexes began in Norway in the same way as in Denmark, in the lower form of secondary education, not in the higher one as in Finland.

The complete co-educational secondary school with both latin and modern line was founded by Ragna Nielsen in Oslo in 1885. The idea of joining together the lower secondary school and the public school entered the discussion from the 1880's. The real "felleskole", school for all social classes, curriculums and for boys and girls began to take shape in Norway. The language question was solved in Norway by an order, that the teaching should be given in the language of the people. The Danish originated literary language and the old Norwegian were living side by side.

In all the compared countries the development of education formed an wholeness containing remarkable details. Outside these countries the central force creating new educational influences was in Middle Europe. The eastern line led from Germany to Sweden and Finland, the western to Denmark and Norway. The progress of ideas and its point of time can be seen along these connections. The co-education of sexes began in Finland and Norway in the 1880's and in Sweden and Denmark in the 1890's except the first co-educational secondary school in Sweden, which was originally a manual trai-

ning school. In Sweden and Denmark the tradition of education and classicism were stronger than in other parts of Europe, Finland and Norway. In all Northern countries the education of girls and the modern curriculum were connected together. The special feature in Finland was the beginning of co-education of sexes directly on the higher secondary school level and leading to the university. In Sweden, Denmark and Norway the right to the university studies already existed for girls before the beginning of co-education in secondary schools.

The radiating educational effects from Middle Europe via western and eastern lines came to the north. Their way was asymmetric so that only a few influences went back from Finland to Sweden or from Norway to Denmark. The co-education in all of its forms did not become common until the 20th century.

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