



STRÖMSTAD ACADEMY

Nordic institute for advanced studies

News Forum

Strömstad Interdisciplinary Academy

Content

Editor's corner Anders Gustavsson	1
Chairman's report	2
Vice-Chancellor's report	4
Åsa Morberg: A second reply to KG Hammarlund	5
KG Hammarlund: A third reply to Åsa Morberg.....	7

Editor's corner Anders Gustavsson

Editor's corner

Anders Gustavsson

Educator and Chairman of the Board Åsa Morberg informs about news in Strömstad Academy. She has written a response to **historian KG Hammarlund's** article in Nyhetsforum August about teacher training in Sweden. **Hammarlund** has written a reply/rebuttal to Morberg.

Vice-Chancellor and Information System Scientist Per Flensburg informs about news in Strömstad Academy.

I want to urge a previous call for all members to verify and complete their personal information on the Academy website. Also try to recruit new members to the Academy, not least young scholars. Please, send suggestions to **Vice-Chancellor Per Flensburg** per.flensburg@stromstadakademi.se

I wish new contributions to the October issue of the Newsletter sent to my e-mail address with deadline on 27 October 2023: anders.gustavsson@ikos.uio.no. Send short articles, opinion articles and/or reviews of new scientific literature. Swedish contributions should have an English translation. Texts should be in Word- or Open Office format!

Please, also send contributions to the Academy's publication series Acta Academia Strömstadiensis, AAS, to peter@wahrborg.se, the video series SAV to: gudmundbergqvist@hotmail.com and the Free Series to: per.flensburg@stromstadakademi.se

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Chairman's report

September's monthly report by Åsa Morberg, Chairman of the Board of Strömstad Academy

Now we are in the first month of fall. This summer has gone by at a rapid pace. We hope for a really nice fall. I get to accompany good friends down to Strömstad for a few days this fall. This is very good for me. I actually need to get a better local knowledge.

I will start by saying something about the Chairmanship. We have shared responsibilities in the Academy. All academic matters are handled by the Vice-Chancellor and the administrative, non-academic matters, by the Board. The work on the Board is time-consuming and the assignment is quite heavy. All the phone calls, all the letters, all the emails, all the attachments and all the texts that are revised several times and come back in for the second, third or fourth time are difficult to control. I have tried to sort and create order with different systems, but it is not always easy. Now Per Flensburg has come up with a proposal that we should get a case management system. I am of course open to trying such a thing. I have always had good clerical support and it is lacking now. There is an excellently skilled Vice-Chancellor, a professional and hardworking Secretary and an excellently knowledgeable and productive Treasurer and all three are doing very good work. We have a good management cooperation.

I am of course used to dealing with academics. I am an academic myself and have worked with academics my entire professional life. Nobody wants to take orders. Everyone wants to do everything their own way. We may find it difficult to balance this and perhaps sometimes find it difficult to cooperate. Nevertheless, we all actually need to try to cooperate in Strömstad Academy. I'm on the board of three associations, a chair position and two secretary positions and it works. I wonder if the discussion about a text outlining the Academy objectives, following the motion to the annual meeting, can improve the work situation for all of us? I do not know? The Board is free to decide. And select a working group.

It has been a very strange summer. Per's illness has been very worrying for all of us. Now it is really gratifying that our Vice-Chancellor Per Flensburg has started to recover. We take Per's illness into account and my ambition is not to overload with work tasks. This means that we all together will do the best we can and some things will of course take time. We get to use the delegation list.

As we previously announced, Vice-Chancellor Per Flensburg has announced that he does not wish to be re-elected as Vice-Chancellor after the end of the term in 2024. A process must be started to appoint a new Vice-Chancellor. The Nominating Committee has this task and this work should start early, so that it is ready before the next annual meeting. Proposals have come from Deputy Chair Jens Allwood, who believes that we could ask the Pro-Vice-Chancellor to work one-year as Vice-Chancellor and that we then instead appoint a new Pro-Vice-Chancellor. We discussed this in the Working Committee. Anders (Pro-Vice-Chancellor) has stated that he is not available for such a solution, though. We will appoint a Vice-Chancellor.

There are still many questions to mention in the monthly report, but I am making a selection. The Science Festival is important and that's why I start with that.

The Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor have decided that the Science Festival will take place in June 2024-06-10-13. The Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor have appointed a planning group and it will surely be very good. The group consists of four mem-

bers Lasse Broman, Peter Fritzell, Rosa Jörgensson and Sveza Filipova. It is a very good group with strong local connections. Although we have a planning group, the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor are responsible for the Science Festival. Views on the program are channeled to Per and Anders. Opinions on everything else go to the planning group. The Science Festival is important both for Strömstad Academy's individual members and the social interaction between the members. It is also important to make Strömstad Academy better known. It is now necessary to balance these two objectives.

We have several items/issues that are lying around without being clubbed. We have pending the adoption of our revised charter/by-laws. Why we did not adopt the charter at the annual meeting is a mystery to me? In the preparation of the annual meeting, I recommended, to the acting Chairman, that the suggested by-laws should be accepted. We agreed on the charter/by-laws in the Board in broad terms. We have now received further points of view to be discussed and this means that a determination is advanced forward in time.

The same applies to the ethics policy and the ethics council. For some reason, we have placed the decision as an item for the annual meeting, and then it would also have been decided at the annual meeting. Why it ended up there, I don't know? We have to make that decision at the Board, because we did not make the decision at the annual meeting. This is also fully discussed, but not clubbed.

John Fletcher has drawn up an overall plan for the work in the Academy and we will discuss that plan both in the Working Committee and the Board. John is well structured and knowledgeable and it is really good for us that John offers his know-how and knowledge. He has an idea for web meetings to discuss important administrative issues. It also increases democracy in the Academy.

Regarding the ongoing work with anthologies, we may ask those responsible for reports. The allocation for printing was decided at SEK 60,000. At the time of writing, no printed submissions have been received yet. The edition will then be 300 copies because the price has increased with the fall of the Swedish krona. It will be a big and important job to try to market the anthology. Rune Wigblad and I did an investigation some time ago about self-produced literature versus literature produced by publishers. We need to try to get publisher-produced literature to have our budget break even. If a publisher takes the printing, we don't have to pay to print an anthology. Marketing is also handled by the publisher. Often in a very good way. It should be worth a try. Admittedly, the publishers invest in the texts, but they usually know what sells.

We need to obtain reports from the local chapters. Written reports are accepted. We have Bodil Frisdal in Lund, Jens Allwood in Gothenburg, Sveza Filipova in Strömstad, Peter Fritzell in Falun and Marylou Wadenberg in Stockholm/Uppsala. We need to ask the group of coordinators to discuss who should be convenor in the coordinator group and then let us know the decision. Sveza waives her coordinator assignment at her own request.

A final consideration regarding the CV:s that we have decided should be online. We are missing CV:s from many members. Surely all members have a CV that can be posted? It should be an easy thing to fix for academics. Now we all take the plunge and post our résumés or simply post a link. Our website is the our face to the outside world. If half of the members have a CV and half don't, it gives a strange and somewhat unprofessional impression.

Vice-Chancellor's report

I hate it, but I must admit I was wrong. This is about our latest book, the method anthology. I was pessimistic all along about being able to sell this 850 page thick 'brick'. It was presented at a book release in Gothenburg on 19 September. I half-thought that it should be sufficient to bring just two copies. I figured we'd sell a handful at most. But oh how wrong I was! There were 32 orders at the release!!! I've never been so happy to be so wrong! Now we're hoping that the success continues, and that the edition will be sold out! The next book project about power structures is in full swing, Anders is chasing us in his friendly, provident but effective way. This book, I think, can be a bestseller and it shouldn't be a problem to get an external publisher to print it. We have to do a proper calculation.

Speaking of writing, I would like to urge the members of the Academy to be stricter when it comes to the format, they use when writing. For some reason, Anders appointed me early on to be layout manager, to this day I don't know why, but I accepted the assignment partly because I know pretty much about it, especially about Word's peculiarities but also because, in Carl-Bertil's words: "A job well done gives inner satisfaction and is the foundation on which society rests!" So, I am happy and somewhat proud when I get it done in a neat way. Many members are totally indifferent to appearance and believe that it is only the content that counts. But a well-cut Garamond (a typeface/font if you don't know what it is) is a delight to the eye and makes the reader sympathetic to the text. Now I don't have access to any "well-cut Garamond" and presumably neither do very many of the Academy's members. After all, every organization must have its own graphic profile where both the logo, colors, fonts and document layout are supporting elements. Every university and college have its own, more or less comprehensible logo. They have their coloring on the pages, the Linnaeus University has e.g. yellow as a signal color, its predecessor Växjö University had red, Halmstad has blue and Lund has gold and dark blue. We have a logo that can be found at the head of this newsletter, and we have a smaller logo, namely the 'book and the sails'. We also have a color scheme, dark green and milk chocolate brown. However, some say that the brown color can be described with another attribute. We also have the cover image on our publications as a further signalling element. All of this was in place when I took over as Vice-Chancellor. Lasse had probably hired a professional designer to produce this. Missing are the fonts.

Most default fonts are incredibly boring. This is because they are cheap, and no great care is taken in the design (cutting) of the font. One of the nicest, I think, is Optima, which is an incredibly well-made compromise between serif and sans-serif typefaces. Serifs are the small heels at the bottom of the letters. A general rule of thumb is that serif fonts are best for print while sans-serif is best for screen. But nothing prevents you from breaking this rule. Now, it has turned out that Optima is not installed by default on all computers and I'm guessing that the members who don't have it don't know how to get it either. Therefore, it may be an idea to follow KG's advice: Choose a font that everyone has! And the safest thing is to choose a web-safe font. For plain text in books and articles, I therefore suggest Georgia, which works well on the web despite being a serif font. It is also large and has airy letters. The disadvantage is that a long text looks very compact and should be lightened up with some images. I have therefore set this News Forum with Georgia, size 12 pt. In the next newsletter, I will start a "layout school" where I will teach some tricks on how to get a nice and uniform layout. I won't be able to make it this month due to both illness and that I am moving.

Our board meeting on 20 September was cancelled due to technical problems. Åsa's computer crashed and Jens, who is Deputy Chair, had no image on his screen. The conclusion is clear: We cannot use jit.si, it is far too unreliable. John insists that we buy our own Zoom license, but there are several people who have access to it and can make it available in the same way that Peter did with GoToMeeting. In addition, there is Google meet, which is free and which we have not really tried.

Stig Ottosson and I have each submitted an application for a project proposal to the Swedish Institute (SI) on their announcement of support to Ukraine regarding supervision of doctoral students and teaching of young adults. Stig's project concerns supervision of PhD students and post-docs, while my project deals with emancipatory teaching at master's level. The application procedure is complicated, and you have to submit your application in small pieces answering certain questions. So, we cannot post a copy of a complete application, but possibly we can put together something reasonably understandable from what we have. Stig has applied for 1 million SEK and I have applied for 1.5 million SEK. Those who participate will be remunerated in some way and most of it takes place remotely. However, some meetings are planned in Sweden, including a summer school in Strömstad. But one detail remains: Getting the application granted and that is far from certain. But to quote Heidenstam: Better listen to a braking string than never to bend a bow!

Finally, something about my health. I am far from having recovered completely, still walking around with a tube in my nose (oxygen), but I am walking, not using a wheelchair! It is parked in the room for baby strollers. I have oxygen on tubes and with their help I can move quite freely even outdoors. However, about every 5 minutes I have to sit down and catch my breath for a minute or so. Maybe I can come off the oxygen before November...

Until then, I wish all the members of this excellent Academy a wonderful fall, full of good fruits and productive enthusiasm for work!

Per Flensburg

Åsa Morberg: A second reply to KG Hammarlund

Answer 2 to KG Hammarlund - About students' reading comprehension and "practices" in teacher education KG Hammarlund

By Åsa Morberg, PhD in pedagogy and docent in didactics

This discussion between KG Hammarlund and Åsa Morberg is about the professional connection of teacher training. An over-theorizing of higher education has meant that lifelong learning and practical professional skills have been disadvantaged. It is my opinion that teacher education has developed into a more over-theorized general higher education where scientific work and theory are allowed to take up too much space. Broadly speaking, this applies to all academic vocational training in Sweden. I distinguish between proven experience or rather experience and science, which KG Hammarlund does not. This development makes it difficult for trained teachers when they start their careers in my opinion. I actually wrote about this in my thesis from 1999 The topic that almost became: a study of the methodology from 1882-1984 (Morberg, 1999)

First a few words about the quality of the operational part of the teacher training in the so-called in the training schools. Business-based part of the education on a so-called practice school is no guarantee at all that the future teachers would receive a better education based

on activities than they receive in so-called ordinary schools. The fact that the government introduced practice schools does not necessarily mean that these practice schools would work better. For example, you can study the preparatory work for this government decision and you will see what a thin foundation the decision about the practice schools rests on. The fully prepared environment of the practice schools with hand-picked teachers, selected students, small classes and plenty of teaching aids and other supporting resources is considered to have contributed to the fact that the new teachers received and still receive a real shock of practice, when they left the teacher training and started working as teachers in primary schools around the country. I studied this together with Göran Fransson. Together we wrote the book "The first sweet years: new teachers' first time in the profession together with new teachers." For several years, the teachers' union distributed the book to its new members as support during the so-called the introduction period (Fransson & Morberg, 2003)

The training school existed during the seminary period and was discontinued when the teacher training colleges started in 1968. What were the reasons why the training schools were closed down? The teacher training at the seminaries' training schools was not considered to be functional. Through the teachers' colleges' decentralized practice schools, the future teachers would instead gain experience in so-called ordinary schools with unprepared conditions. They would also have the opportunity to link the theoretical studies to the experiences they had in regular schools and thus be able to develop a more functional professional repertoire. I do not see the training school as any guarantee for a better teacher training, regardless of the government's reform. Not everything that comes from the government is of good quality. Training schools closely resemble "broiler factories". I absolutely do not want to support such activities for future teachers.

I have extensive experience in teacher education, basically my entire professional life, as a teacher, researcher and manager from 1966 to 2012. I also have six years of experience working with teacher education within ATEE in Brussels. A few words about KG's experiences of the subject institutions' struggle when they were given a task to train subject teachers. It was, of course, an opportunity for subject institutions after the 2001 reform to develop their activities into professional training for teachers. Prospective teachers must have sustainable subject didactic training and if you look at UKÄ's evaluations, there is still a lack of professional adaptation and this is devastating for prospective teachers. You can see how subject institutions, for example, coordinate education for future engineers and future teachers. If the engineers were to receive a good didactic education, all would be well and good, but that is not the case. Prospective teachers must have a clear professional focus on their education by professional teacher educators. Interesting that KG Hammarlund does not differentiate between proven experience and scientific basis. However, I do.

Practical professional knowledge must absolutely be valued higher. For my part, practical professional knowledge and scientific work are not the same thing. The introduction of the Bologna process has really made the situation for academic vocational training more difficult. Ironically, the introduction of the Bolnga Process in Sweden has had the exact opposite effect, as the possibility of crediting previous professional and educational experience when applying for higher education was removed in 2011. This has drastically reduced the incentive for people to continue learning and developing in their professional lives, because their previous experiences are no longer valued when applying for new educations.

The introduction of degrees at basic and advanced level has been interpreted in our country as a theoretical essay at the end of the education, which is similar to a traditional scientific essay which, in my opinion, is templated and stereotyped. This form of examination is con-

sidered suitable for theoretical and research preparation courses, but it is less suitable for professionally oriented courses. The focus on such an examination form disadvantages the students who have more practical skills and learning preferences (Hedlund, 2023).

I myself have been an expert both in Sweden, Denmark and in Norway during several appointments and there I have seen a different direction. If you do not have your own teacher training, experience in school and teacher training, you will not be included in the discussions about service. We in Sweden possibly require a thin university pedagogical education, covering 10 weeks. The content of the higher education education can also be discussed. It is an insult to the students in teacher training that their teachers are not properly trained. What KG Hammarlund describes must be the exceptions that confirm the rule then.

In summary, the academic vocational training programs are in bad shape. It can be seen in the influx to teacher training, it can be seen in the dropouts from the profession, etc. There is a discussion in Strömstad Akademi about professional projects, pleasingly enough! It is necessary. The Bologna process is a voluntary collaborative process, which absolutely does not prescribe specific examination tasks. The examination forms need to be developed to offer opportunities to choose between theoretical and practical examination tasks, such as practical projects, internships or workplace-based assessments. In this way, we can possibly create a balanced and inclusive higher education that promotes both theoretical knowledge and practical professional competence. There are variations in how different countries and educational institutions choose to design their examination forms. It is high time that we revise the application of the Bologna process in Sweden to ensure that higher education really enables lifelong learning and supports profession-oriented skills and knowledge. By valuing and encouraging both theoretical and practical knowledge, we will be able to meet our challenges on the labor market and ensure a competent and diversified workforce also for the school system (Hedlund, 2023).

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KG Hammarlund: A third reply to Åsa Morberg

A third reply to Åsa Morberg - About students' reading comprehension and "practices" in teacher education

KG Hammarlund

Åsa Morberg and I agree on some points, but not on all – and maybe we will never agree on everything.

On assessment: as I wrote in my previous answer, I agree with Morberg that degree projects in teacher training are many times (though not always!) template-like and stereotyped. The same can be said for other course or module assessments, and not only within teacher education courses. There is a tradition of assessments that test the students' ability to recapitulate the content of the course literature, rather than the ability to apply the knowledge provided by the course literature. I have previously written about the desirability of developing authentic examinations (Hammarlund 2018).

Åsa Morberg writes that, unlike her, I do not differentiate between proven experience and scientific basis. I cannot understand how Morberg came to that conclusion. What I wrote in my previous answer was that I cannot see any contradiction or any competitive relationship between a scientifically based and a practice-preparatory education. But perhaps Morberg means that there is actually a contradiction?

As for the over-theorizing that Morberg criticizes, I agree that it is problematic in cases where the education is filled with elements that provide an orientation in theories without ever giving room for their relevance to the teaching profession. On the other hand, I am convinced that, for example, subject didactic theories are a valuable, indeed indispensable knowledge for a teacher. A shallow master/apprentice model, where students adopt working teaching models from experienced colleagues without understanding why these models work is insufficient.

Finally: Åsa Morberg once again paints a picture of teacher education in free fall where students meet untrained and insufficiently experienced lecturers. My own more multifaceted picture is dismissed as nothing but exceptions that confirm the rule.

As I have pointed out in previous replies, the changes that are taking place within universities after the introduction of the new teacher training program in 2001 is a slow and still ongoing process. Morberg herself dates her long experience from teacher education to the years 1966-2012. I was active as subject leader in secondary teacher education until my retirement in 2019 and still teach in courses within secondary teacher education programs. When it comes to subject didactics, I have frequent contacts with colleagues at several institutions through research networks, seminar series and conferences. Maybe this can explain the difference in our respective views?

I have never claimed, and do not intend to claim, that Swedish teacher education does not suffer from weaknesses and shortcomings. Students may encounter teachers who do not understand or do not want to adapt their teaching to the requirements that should be placed on a professional education. But that is not the whole picture. There are many examples of well-functioning, well-thought-out profession-oriented and practice-related lectures, seminars, and assessments. Why is it so difficult to acknowledge the existence of these good examples, and to recognize them as potential starting points for improving those parts that (still) lack the desired quality?

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