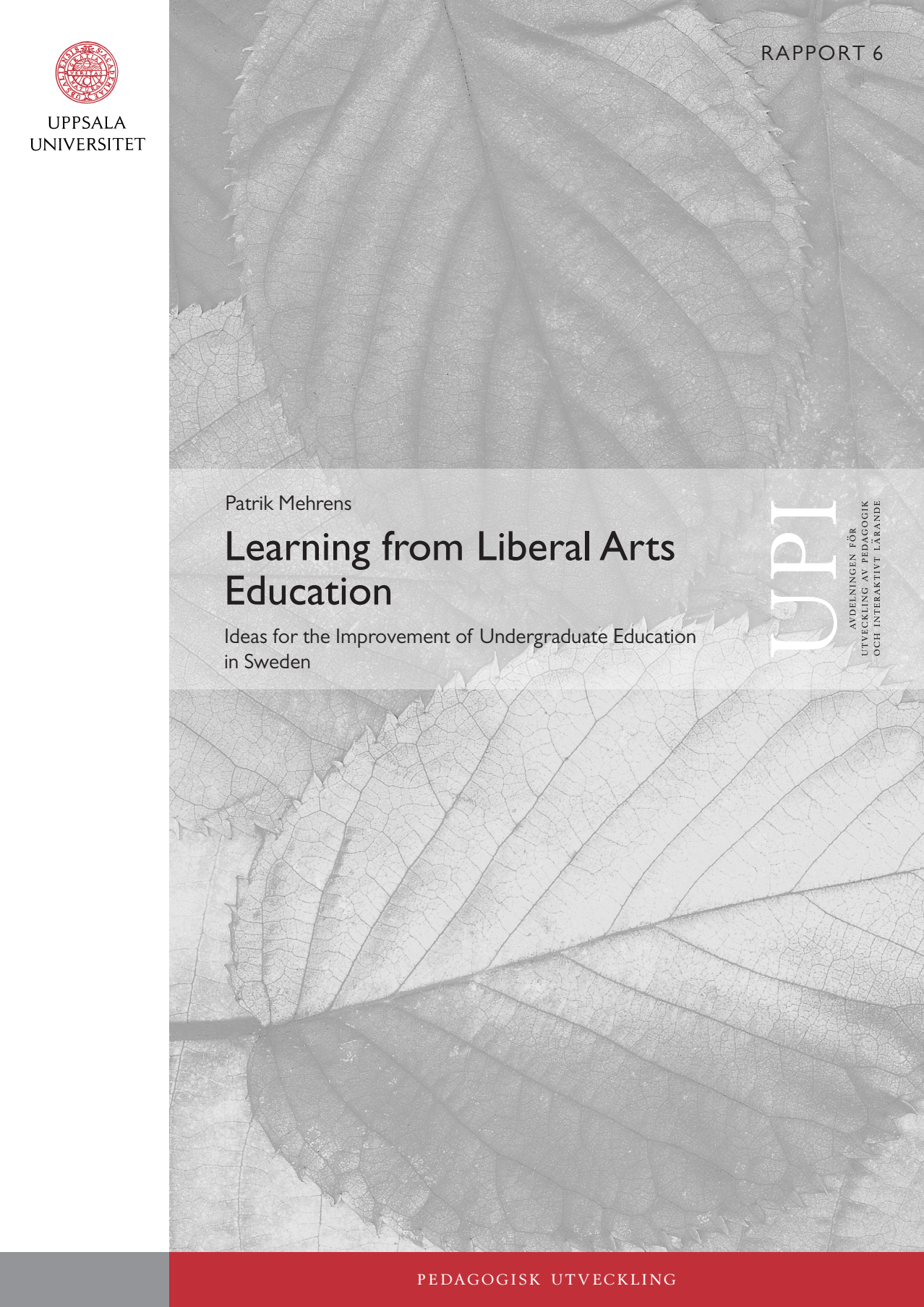


UPPSALA UNIVERSITET

RAPPORT 6

Patrik Mehrens

Learning from Liberal Arts Education

Ideas for the Improvement of Undergraduate Education in Sweden

UPI
AVDELNINGEN FÖR UTVECKLING AV PEDAGOGIK OCH INTERAKTIVT LÄRANDE

PEDAGOGISK UTVECKLING

Learning from Liberal Arts Education.

Ideas for the Improvement of Undergraduate Education in Sweden.

PATRIK MEHRENS

UPPSALA UNIVERSITET

Avdelningen för utveckling av pedagogik och interaktivt lärande

APRIL 2006

UPPSALA UNIVERSITET
Avdelningen för utveckling av pedagogik och interaktivt lärande
ISSN 1652-084X

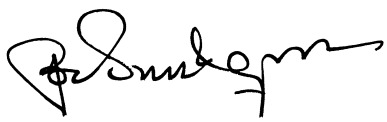
April 2006

Författare: Patrik Mehrens
Omslag: Pia Arrevik, Ateljé Bredgränd, Uppsala
Tryck: Universitetstryckeriet, Ekonomikum, Uppsala

Introductory Note

In some respects, liberal arts education has been a neglected feature of higher education in Sweden. Today, in our teaching at Swedish universities and university colleges we sometimes take for granted the values on which our society is built, the relative merits of these values, and the role of the individual in realizing them. It is my belief that we must spend more time on contemplating how a liberal education influences and furthers all fields and aspects of our society. I hope that this report can be a starting point for discussions on how we can learn from the ways in which liberal education has been implemented in a transatlantic context. More importantly, however, I hope we can start thinking about how to renew liberal education and how such a revitalized tradition can be put to use in a Swedish framework.

Uppsala in June 2006



Bo Sundqvist
President of Uppsala University

Acknowledgements

I want to express my deepest gratitude to the people who have made this project possible. I am especially grateful to all my colleagues at the English Department of St. Olaf College, for providing me with material and for sharing valuable time in discussions. I am particularly indebted to the Department Chair, Assistant Professor Mary Steen, for all her efforts to make my stay a both pleasant and productive experience. I also want to thank Assistant Professor Eliot Wilson for giving me the opportunity to teach American students, an indeed rewarding experience. I am immensely grateful to Professor Jonathan Hill, for spending hours with me clarifying curricular obscurities. With his unique perspectives on both Swedish and American education, and his assiduous efforts to enlighten me, Professor Hill's importance for my work is simply inestimable. Among all the people who have assisted me at St. Olaf College, I also want to thank Professor Lynn Steen at the Department of Mathematics, Barbara Evans at the Theatre Department, Associate Professor Dan Hofrenning at the *Center for Innovation in the Liberal Arts*, and Patricia van Wylen at the International Office of St. Olaf College.

Thank you also to Professor Lars Burman, Chair at the Department of Literature in Uppsala, for approaching me with the idea of this project. I am also grateful for all the insights regarding public colleges provided by Associate Professor Janet Schrunk Ericksen at the University of Minnesota, Morris, and Professor Samuel Schuman, Chancellor of Morris College. Thank you also to Professor emeritus of Sociology David Johnson at the University of Minnesota.

This project has been made possible through contributions provided by STINT (The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education), and Uppsala University.

Uppsala April 21, 2006

Patrik Mehrens

Contents

1. Introduction 7
1.1 The purpose of this study 7
1.2 Disposition 8
1.3 Background: undergraduate education in Sweden 9
1.5 The Bologna Process 14

2. The Concept of Liberal Arts Education 19
2.1 History 19
2.2 Contemporary Liberal Arts Education 24
2.3 The implications of "general knowledge" 27
2.4 The debate on Liberal Arts Education 31

3. The Practice of Liberal Arts Education 45
3.1 U.S. system of education 45
3.2 St. Olaf College: facts and figures 47
3.3 Degrees and formal requirements 48
3.4 *General Education*: history, function and structure 53
3.5 *General Education* at St. Olaf College 62
3.6 Writing Across the Curriculum 71
3.7 Oral communication 75
3.8 Religion and Ethics 77
3.9 Additional *General Education* requirements 80
3.10 Multi-disciplinary General Education: *The Great Conversation* 83

4. Teaching 91
4.1 Teaching and research 91
4.2 Teaching load and course structure 98
4.3 Pedagogy 101

4.4 Learning outcomes 111
4.5 Tenure 115

5. Summary 119

References 127

Tidigare rapporter från Avdelningen för utveckling av pedagogik och interaktivt lärande 137

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this study

This study is the result of a five-month stay at the English Department of St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. St. Olaf College is a highly ranked, private liberal arts college, and the purpose of my stay has been to investigate, theoretically and in practice, how undergraduate education in the U.S. might provide a model for the development and improvement of undergraduate education in Sweden. Since St. Olaf College is a *liberal arts* college, the investigation focuses on that particular tradition. In fact, one important part of the study goes beyond the specific education of St. Olaf, and includes a broader description of the *tradition* and *concept* of liberal arts education. In this theoretical section, I trace the historical developments of this educational model, but I also give an account of the most important principles associated with it. In the discussion of the *practice* of liberal arts education, the study mainly focuses on St. Olaf College, but in addition, comparisons will be made with other colleges in- and outside of Minnesota, especially Morris College, which is part of the University of Minnesota. The general difference between St. Olaf College and Morris is that the former is a private college with a religious profile and a value-based curriculum, whereas Morris is a public liberal arts college with no religious affiliation.

1.2 Disposition

The structure of this study looks as follows. In the latter part of this introduction, I provide an outline of specific aspects of Swedish undergraduate education which have guided my investigation. This outline identifies certain problematic areas within Swedish undergraduate education, as well as the scope of the *Bologna Process*. The general purpose of this section is to provide an understanding of my own perspective on Swedish undergraduate education, but it also specifies the questions I want to answer in this study.

The chapter "The Concept of Liberal Arts Education" introduces the history and concept of liberal arts education in the U.S., and describes its position within the American system of education as a whole. It is my conviction that any use of liberal arts education within Swedish higher education benefits from as broad an understanding as possible of the complexity and multi-faceted identity and shape of liberal education in the U.S. The historical background provides necessary background information on how liberal education developed in the U.S., and tries to give a comprehensive description of why liberal arts education has developed in certain ways. Since the current shape of liberal arts education corresponds closely with contemporary developments within a global society, this description is highly valuable also for the Swedish system. Apart from this, I will also give an outline of the debate surrounding liberal arts education. Since the arguments pro and contra this educational tradition mirror conflicts within the Swedish society and the Swedish educational system, it is my belief that knowledge of this debate is beneficial for the possibilities to adapt parts of, or be inspired by, this educational model.

The chapter "The Practice of Liberal Arts Education" contains a more detailed discussion on how liberal arts education is being employed at different colleges, notably St. Olaf College. The main purpose of this section is to provide an understanding of how liberal arts curricula are constructed. Close attention will be given to

the *General Education* requirements within liberal arts curricula, and comparisons will be made with the Swedish system. This section also comprises information on grading, courses and programs, how undergraduate education relates to graduate education within the American system of higher education. Close attention will be given to two major phenomena: the method of education called *Writing Across the Curriculum*, and multi-disciplinary programs. Since my study has been oriented towards *General Education*, I will only briefly discuss the specialized studies of college education, i.e. the *major* studies.

The last main chapter discusses issues of teaching. Since teaching is one of the cornerstones of liberal arts education, I will make comparisons between teachers´ working conditions in Sweden and in the U.S, but I will also discuss different approaches to teaching and basic principles of pedagogy within liberal arts education. The basic question in this section is what teachers at Swedish universities can learn from colleagues at colleges in the U.S. Issues that will be addressed are, for instance, the relationship between teaching and research, teacher – student relations, and *integrative learning* as a one essential principle of pedagogy within liberal arts education.

1.3 Background: undergraduate education in Sweden

Although the main purpose of this study is to describe principles and practices characteristic of liberal arts education, my aim is also to put these aspects in relation to the status of undergraduate education in Sweden, notably within the Faculty of Arts at Uppsala University. Throughout the investigation, I will thus comment on the potential usefulness of liberal arts education within the Swedish educational system. This will be done with reference to two main fields of interest concerning Swedish undergraduate education. The first consists of what I consider as areas of concern within the

Swedish educational system. The second field regards what changes are in fact possible with respect to the development of the *Bologna Process*. Observations from the perspective of these main interests will be made throughout the study, but I will also present the most important conclusions in a summary at the end of the study. The following areas of concern have worked as guiding lines for my investigation.

The gap between the Upper Secondary School and the University

One problematic aspect of undergraduate education in Sweden is what I experience as an increasing gap between the Swedish Upper Secondary School (Gymnasiet) and the University. In my understanding, this is a *cultural gap* (a growing amount of students are not used to how knowledge is being produced at universities), as well as a *gap of ignorance* (many students are not properly prepared for university studies). Two possible explanations for this is a certain degree of deterioration within the Swedish Upper Secondary School on the one hand, and the fact that the university attracts a larger number of first-generation students than before, on the other. Yet another explanation is that research universities like Uppsala University, have more or less maintained their traditional elitist orientation and structure, and thereby alienated themselves from the demands and developments of knowledge within contemporary society.

Whatever the reasons for this development, the general impression is that university teachers, at least within the Faculty of Arts, have been forced to lower the demands put upon students. In my understanding, this situation becomes truly problematic when it is not supported by reforms of the curriculum. In my understanding, the lowering of the demands in combination with the maintenance of the traditional curriculum potentially poses a threat to educational quality within both undergraduate and graduate studies. Two

main questions can be extracted from these problems: 1) How can liberal arts education contribute to narrow the gap between Upper Secondary School and the university, and 2) How can liberal arts education contribute to secure or even improve the quality of undergraduate as well as graduate education at the university?

Available preparatory college education in Sweden

Some universities and university colleges in Sweden already provide preparatory "colleges" or "college programs" available for students who do not themselves believe they have the necessary qualifications to commence university studies. One question I have asked myself is whether this model really has the potential to address the problems mentioned above. Are "college semesters" or specific compensatory educational programs really the solution to a problem which seems to concern a much larger number of students than the ones actually attending these programs? Are there reasons to consider either prescribed broadening courses in every educational program at the university, or the use of pedagogical methods across the curriculum, methods with the potential to convey basic knowledge necessary for the conduct of university studies? Connected to these issues is the status and function of existing *core curricula* in Sweden. Uppsala University offers one elective course designated C*ore curriculum*, and part of my investigation reflects upon how this course relates to the tradition of liberal arts education.

Student groups have become more diversified

This statement conveys another approach to the same basic problem mentioned above. The fact that the university at present attracts new categories of students, among which several are not used to the learning culture of the university, testifies to a demand for

new pedagogical methods, not least since several of the methods currently used, are developed for less diversified groups of students.[1] One basic question within this field is how Uppsala University can increase accessibility and at the same time maintain its high quality standards, i.e. how it can still uphold its status as a leading research university. Is it, for example, possible to find alternatives to the "collectivistic" approach of undergraduate education, and develop educational patterns that are more oriented towards each individual student? Is it possible, for instance, to develop a curriculum for undergraduate studies, which satisfies both students aiming at graduate studies, and students who intend to use their degrees outside of the university? This can also be formulated as a problem of combining an increased broadness within the curriculum with the maintenance of the specialization required for students attracted by higher levels of education.

Teaching vs. Research

The teaching load of Swedish university teachers is very high, in comparison with, for instance, Norway and Denmark. As recently has been stated in a report commissioned by the *Swedish National Agency for Higher Education*, this can pose a threat to academic

[1] See, for example, the Swedish Government Commission *SOU* 2000: 47: "If the system of higher education has a tendency to promote and reward a certain kind of intelligence, and if the system of higher education at the same time expands significantly with regard to the number of students, the result is probably a tension between pedagogical methods developed within a less differentiated system of education when these are being applied within an increasingly more differentiated body of students." (My transl. Cf: "Om det högre utbildningssystemet har en tendens att befrämja och belöna viss intelligens, och systemet samtidigt tillväxer starkt vad gäller antalet studenter, uppstår det sannolikt en spänning mellan pedagogiska arbetsmetoder som utvecklats i ett mindre differentierat högre utbildningssystem när dessa tillämpas på en allt mer differentierad studentgrupp."

freedom.[2] Related to this is the fact that, within the university, there is a hierarchical relationship between scholars who actually perform academic research and teachers who spend most of their time teaching. This entails several problems, e.g. difficulties for university teachers to develop their own knowledge and to fulfill the "Third Mission", i.e. to inform the society (and students) about scholarly research. It also means that undergraduate teaching suffers from a low status in comparison with academic research, a bothersome fact since research and teaching are being done at the same departments. Since many teachers actually identify themselves as scholars, rather than as teachers, this situation, in my experience, often causes frustration and a lack of motivation among university teachers. My impression is that this also poses a threat to the quality of undergraduate education.

The funding of undergraduate education

The funding of Swedish undergraduate education stands in direct relation to the number of students that actually pass examination and graduate. This creates a conflict of interest among university teachers between their academic mission and the economic interests of their departments, a conflict of interest which is a potential threat to the quality of the education.

The "crisis" within the Humanities

Within the field of humanities in Sweden, there has been a discussion on how humanist research has turned inwards, and consequently lost relevance in the eyes of contemporary society. This discussion clearly relates to the fact that several humanistic fields

[2] Li Bennich Björkman, *Överlever den akademiska friheten? En intervjustudie av svenska forskares villkor i universitetens brytningstid*, Högskoleverket, 2004:1 R.

tend to attract less students than before. If Swedish educators treasure the relationship between research and teaching, we probably should reflect more upon how the humanities relate to society, and how to reconnect the field of humanities with the field of ethics. This aspect also relates to questions regarding multi- and interdisciplinary work, and the fact that the borders between departments within the field of the humanities, no longer reflect the often cross-disciplinary research done within the departments. One question that has guided my study is whether liberal arts colleges think differently with regard to the relationship between different departments. Is it possible to find ways through which increased collaboration between departments can benefit both research and undergraduate education?

This field also connects to the fact that there is a tendency among Swedish students to challenge and question the curriculum in its present shape. Sometimes this tendency is expressed through a demand that teachers within the humanities should clarify the utilitarian ends of education. Students want to know how they can use their knowledge. How can university teachers answer to this "instrumental" attitude among students? Are there ways in which the information about the ends of non-vocational training or the significance of knowledge breadth within vocational programs (for instance within Teacher Training Courses), can be improved? Or is it possible to develop and refine the arguments supporting the non-utilitarian character of non-vocational training, i.e. to find ways to increase students´ awareness of the benefits of being well-informed and broadly educated?

1.5 The Bologna Process

One aspect of this study is that it has been conducted with special attention to the changes resulting from the *Bologna Process*. The *Bologna Process* is one of several factors that call for a discussion on

how undergraduate education can be developed and improved. However, since this process is an international initiative, it does not address some of the problems that are unique for the Swedish educational system. The main points in the *Bologna Process*, as stated in *The Bologna Declaration*,[3] are 1) to develop a system with clear and comparable degrees (Diploma Supplements), 2) to develop a system with mainly two levels of education (basic level and advanced level), 3) to introduce the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), 4) to increase mobility for students and employees at Universities and University colleges, 5) to promote European collaboration within the field of quality maintenance, and 6) to promote the European dimension within higher education.

In my work, I have used the document *Bolognaprocessen vid Uppsala universitet – fas 2*, as a guiding tool for how ideas from the American educational system can contribute to develop the reformed Swedish system.[4] Since the *Bologna Process* is an ongoing and constantly changing process, I have not been able to measure my observations against any exact model of how education at Uppsala University will be structured. However, I have picked out a few areas that, in my opinion, deserve closer attention, and I hope to address them at least briefly with some suggestions throughout my study. These areas, gathered from statements made by Uppsala University both in the year 2004 and 2005, are the following:

Requirements for Candidate Degrees

According to the policy of Uppsala University, a candidate degree should consist of 120 credit points. 60 credit points should consist of in-depth (i.e. major) studies within one subject field, including a

[3] *The Bologna Declaration of June 1999*, Joint Declaration for the European Ministers of Education, www.sweden.gov.se.

[4] *Bolognaprocessen vid Uppsala universitet – fas 2*, Slutrapport från Bolognagruppen fas 2, 2005-09-02.

one-degree project of 10 credit points. 20 credit points should be from another subject area.

It is also stated that the university should develop high quality profiled candidate programs together with the maintained possibility for students to choose freely among single subject courses. Another important factor is that a candidate degree "[...] in a more clear way than before should constitute a sufficient educational alternative that is attractive both in the job market and makes possible a Master degree."[5]

Requirements for Master Degrees (advanced level).

The current "magisterutbildning" at Uppsala University requires 120 + 40 credit points but will, in some instances, be reformed, and require 120 + 80 credit points. The policy document stresses the fact that in some cases there is still a need for maintaining the traditional "magisterutbildning", and it is stated that these areas must be given special analysis in the light of the overall changes.[6] One important part of this statement is that courses within the Master Degree should prepare students for doctoral studies. Uppsala University should be profiled towards awarding Master Degrees comprising 80 credit points, of which at least 20 and at most 40 credit points shall consist of an independent degree project.

It is also stated that Master Programs either can consist of single subject courses or of course conglomerates in profiled Master Programs. In order to increase mobility among students, the University will work towards creating so called Joint Programs.[7]

---

[5] Ibid., p. 6. My transl. See also "Policy för Uppsala universitets fortsatta arbete med Bolognaprocessen", Beslut UFV 2003/399, 2005-02-22.

[6] *Bolognaprocessen vid Uppsala universitet – fas 2*, Slutrapport från Bolognagruppen fas 2, 2005-09-02, p. 17.

[7] Ibid., p. 18.

Grading

The policy document states that the issue of a seven-grade scale must be thoroughly discussed before any decision can be made. Since many colleges in the U.S. practice a five-grade scale, this discussion can learn from the pros and cons of the American grading system.

Learning outcomes

The policy document states that learning outcomes shall be clearly stated within the curriculum. As stated in the policy declaration of Uppsala University, this demand stands in close relationship to the widespread shift within universities from models based on teaching to models based on learning.

Level descriptions

Courses within undergraduate education should be classified so that a clear progression within the education can be gathered. In the U.S., courses are clearly distinguished by different level descriptions.

Student research

I have also been thinking in terms of how research oriented assignments can be worked into undergraduate education, that aspect

also being stressed in Uppsala University's policy regarding the *Bologna Process*.[8]

[8] Ibid.

2. The Concept of Liberal Arts Education

2.1 History

Historically, liberal arts education stands in close relationship with the ancient, medieval, and Renaissance practice of *artes liberales*. The ancient shape and content of *artes liberales* varies enormously, and according to Bruce A. Kimball, it is not until about the time of Augustine in the fifth century that the system appears in a systematized shape, as the *septem artes liberales*.[9] This system was traditionally divided into two sub-categories: the *quadrivium*, the study of things, and the *trivium*, the study of words. Quadrivium included arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy, whereas trivium included grammar, rhetoric and logic.[10] Through history, the subjects included in each category have varied, but for a long time that did not affect the fundamental function of this educational system, namely to educate the "free citizen".[11] It is important to understand this original notion of "liberal", as denoting the clientele for which the education was intended. This notion was still valid during the Renaissance, when liberal arts education was practiced in England,

[9] Bruce A. Kimball, "A Historical Perspective", in Nicholas H. Farnham and Adam Yarmolinsky (eds.), *Rethinking Liberal Education*, New York, Oxford 1996, pp. 11 – 35, p. 17. See also Henri I. Marrou, "Les arts libéraux dans l´antiquité classique", in *Artes libéraux au moyen age: Actes du quatrième Congrès International de Philosophie Médiévale*, Paris 1969, pp. 5 – 27.

[10] Bruce A. Kimball, *Orators & Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education*, New York and London 1986, p. 13.

[11] Ibid.

but in modern times "liberal" has come to characterize both the essence and the *liberalizing effect* of the education. It is still a notion, though, that liberal arts education, by providing general knowledge beyond what is necessary for a specific vocational career, carries a luxurious exclusiveness intended only for the few. The mission to "free" the student was, however, stated already by Seneca, who, in his well known letter on liberal education, claims that the only kind of education that really deserves the name *liberalis* "[…] is one that makes its pupils free, able to take charge of their own thought and to conduct a critical examination of their society's norms and traditions."[12] An important aspect of this statement is that it reflects two features essential to liberal arts education even today, namely *independent* and *critical thinking*.

As has been pointed out by several commentators, liberal arts education has a very discontinuous history, and it is impossible to regard it as a uniform phenomenon.[13] In order to understand its modern shape, and the ways in which its modern practice relates to its traditional identities, it is necessary look at the development of colleges and universities in the U.S. Although the earliest educational institutions in the U.S. were founded already in the seventeenth century,[14] the most radical development of the educational system took place during the nineteenth century. One important factor behind the growth of colleges during this period was that they often evolved out a former type of school called the "Normal School". Normal Schools were small teacher training schools, modeled after educational institutions in Europe (cf. "ecole normal"),

---

[12] Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, Cambridge Massachusetts, and London, England 1997, p. 30.

[13] "[…] the tradition of liberal education is not uniform and continuous but full of variety, discontinuity, and innovation. It has been and is a conflicted tradition." Kimball 1996, p. 11.

[14] Early colleges in the U.S., were Harvard College (now University), 1636, St. John's 1696, Washington and Jefferson, 1781. See David W. Breneman, *Liberal Arts Colleges: Thriving, Surviving, or Endangered?* Washington D.C. 1994, p. vii.

and they grew quickly in number during the early years of the nineteenth century. Normal schools were often two-year schools, but as the need for education increased towards the latter part of the nineteenth century, many Normal Schools broadened their curriculum and extended their period of training. In this way, they managed to enhance the skills of educated teachers.

During these developments, American educators looked increasingly at Europe, notably Germany, for inspiration. This led to a growing interest for academic research, and to the adaptation of the German principles of *Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit*, i.e. the right for students to study whatever they want, and for academic teachers to teach at their own discretion.[15] This adjustment of American college education to the academic freedom of the German system, together with an increased interest in research and *Bildung*,[16] also meant that the educational system went through a significant process of secularization.[17] However, this development was problematic since it drew colleges nearer to a traditional university culture, and farther away from the specific needs of society. One crucial aspect of the American educational system during the second half of the nineteenth century was thus a confusion surrounding the identity and mission of colleges and universities. Neither the university nor the college had a clearly defined function and much of the debate

---

[15] Kimball 1986, p. 161 f.

[16] *Bildung* is a term invented by the philosopher Johan Gottfried Herder in the 19th century. Herder pledged for education as a "universal history" over the evolution of the world. For Herder, true learning presupposed the free, spontaneous and creative development of the individual. Sven-Eric Liedman, "In Search of Isis: General Education in Germany and Sweden", in Sheldon Rothblatt and Björn Wittrock (eds.), *The European and American University since 1800: Historical and Sociological Essays*, Cambridge 1993, pp. 74 – 108. Herder's ideas were developed further by Humboldt, who proposed that all vocational training should be done outside of universities.

[17] See David B. Potts, "American Colleges in the Nineteenth Century: From Localism to Denominationalism", in *The History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 11, 1971: 4, pp. 363 – 380.

during this period was about whether universities should offer vocational training, or whether colleges should develop into research institutions.

The Post-Civil War period consequently came as a time for great reforms of the U.S. educational system, reforms that aimed at clarifying the role of the university and the college. The Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1891 are often considered as landmarks in the modernization of American college culture. The first Morrill Act involved federal to state donations of land for the support of higher education. In exchange for a certain amount of territory, some states had to build at least one land-grant College on the property received.[18] The Morrill Acts to a large extent contributed to determine the function of colleges, since one of the intentions behind these Acts was to provide an education for the industrial class rather than for scholarly oriented students. The new college education was supposed to be both "liberal" and "practical", i.e. both founded in classical studies and oriented towards professional endeavors within agriculture and industry.[19] Through this two-sided ambition, colleges also fulfilled another important purpose, namely to compensate for the often inadequate education provided by elementary and secondary common schools.[20]

Since college education thus developed as a broad education directed towards society and life itself, it came to stand in deep contrast to academic specialization. This contrast caused further controversy regarding the function of higher education in the U.S. As Christopher Lucas has pointed out, part of this controversy was expressed through the debate between "modernists" and "reactionaries" at the end of the nineteenth century. The modernists thought that the rapid development of science demanded a higher degree of

---

[18] Gordon C. Lee, "The Morrill Act and Education", *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 12, 1963:1, pp. 19 – 40, p. 26. See also Christopher J. Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History*, New York 1994, p. 146 ff.

[19] Ibid., p. 148.

[20] Ibid., p. 152.

academic specialization, and for this reason, they promoted a system with more elective courses within colleges and universities. Contrary to this, the reactionaries argued for "[…] a single prescribed course of studies for all," i.e. a *core curriculum*.[21] It is interesting to note that these traditionalists defended the fixed curriculum by defining the function of normal education as a means to develop both the "mental and moral faculties" of the human mind.[22]

Modern liberal arts education must be understood with respect to this conflict between traditionalists and modernists, and with respect to the tensions between systems of free elective courses and systems characterized by fixed curricula. During the twentieth century, liberal arts education has appeared as different combinations of the two systems. There also has been no consensus as to which system should prevail. C*ore curriculum* is the traditional ideal of liberal arts education, but in the face of the development of modern society, this educational model has been forced to compromise with its own ideals, and allow various amounts of elective courses to enter its curricula. This is also the reason why many commentators today point to the fact that modern liberal arts education has no unified model for its curriculum,[23] and why some educators even claim that liberal arts education has lost its identity. It is important to understand, though, that cautions of this kind are themselves expressions of the importance given to the function and status of liberal arts education. The changes of and uncertainties surrounding modern liberal arts education have become essential parts of its identity. In order to understand modern liberal arts education it is necessary to acknowledge the fact that it continuously changes its shape, and that it does so according, not only to the demands of students, but to ideology, to professional demands in

[21] Ibid., p. 166.

[22] Ibid.

[23] See, for instance, Frank F. Wong, "The Search for American Liberal Education", in Farnham, Yarmolinsky 1996, pp. 63 – 76, esp. p. 63 f.

working life, and to society's demand for either scientific progress or for a common value-system or cultural identity.

2.2 Contemporary Liberal Arts Education

Characteristic of liberal arts colleges today is that they generally award majors within the liberal arts and sciences, i.e. within the natural, physical, and social sciences and within the humanities. Two fundamental features of liberal arts education are thus its *non-vocational* and its *pre-professional* character. Liberal arts colleges aim at developing "[…] general knowledge and general intellectual capabilities, as opposed to professional, vocational, or technical studies."[24] Or as Denise R. Ditmore puts it: Liberal arts colleges provide students with "[…] a curriculum intended to expand their knowledge beyond their major courses of study."[25] This is a feature that liberal arts colleges share with, for example, European non-vocational education programs, such as Bachelor Degree programs within the field of the humanities, which are based on the Humboldtian notion of *Bildung*. American liberal arts education also shares with the European system the basic conviction that these kinds of studies aim at forming the individual character, something which involves both moral upbringing and leads to "[...] the enrichment of life".[26] These arguments, however, have somewhat

[24] Henry H. Crimmel, *The Liberal Arts College and the Ideal of Liberal Education. The Case for Radical Reform*, Lanham, New York, London 1993, p. 116.

[25] Denise R. Ditmore, "An Examination of the Issues Facing Career-Based Curriculum Policies in Liberal Arts Colleges and Universities", *New Foundation. Supporting the Reflective Educator* [Online Journal] 2001, www.newfoundation.com.

[26] Nussbaum 1997, p. 297. See also Sheldon Rothblatt, *Tradition and Change in English Liberal Education. An essay in History and Culture*, London 1976, p. 199 f: "The ends of a liberal education are truly ethical. The Georgian belief in civility, Goethe's trilogy of values, and the modern critical ideal expressed as the search for truth are all different ways of achieving the same goal. Hence the continuity as well of the two necessary conditions for achieving the good life: the belief that

disappeared within, for instance, the Swedish system, where the ethical implications of education as well as the consequences for the individual of the education are seldom discussed.

Another feature of liberal arts education, and one closely connected to the expansion of knowledge mentioned above, is that it aims at generating well-informed students, i.e. students that are prepared both for everyday life and for several career choices. This indeed outspoken ambition is, in my view, also relatively absent within the Swedish system, most likely because the opinion of educators in Sweden is that this basic function of education should be fulfilled in Upper Secondary School.

The fact that liberal arts education stands out as non-vocational or pre-professional is worth some further comment. In my understanding, the description of liberal arts education as non-vocational often has its foundation in a traditional understanding of what this education *should* be. If we look closer at liberal arts colleges today, however, it is clear that many colleges actually contain vocationally oriented programs. St. Olaf College, for instance, has one Nursing School, a part of the college often considered as a radical exception from the rule of liberal arts education.[27] Overall, though, the 44 majors at St. Olaf College include no less than 10 teaching certifications and 20 pre-professional fields.[28] Although liberal arts col-

---

before all else liberal education must inculcate reason, from which it follows that a proper education is general or broad; and that it much teach the individual to live in harmony with himself with the world."

[27] The Nursing Program at St. Olaf College collaborates with a similar program at the nearby located Gustavus Adolphus College. Gustavus Adolphus also has several pre-professional programs, e.g. a pre-dentistry, pre-engineering and a pre-medical program. See the Gustavus Adolphus College homepage, www.gustavus.edu.

[28] Many colleges who call themselves liberal arts colleges have in fact transformed themselves into more or less vocational institutions. See, for instance, Samuel Schuman, *Old Main: Small Colleges in Twenty-First Century America*, Baltimore and London 2005, p. 16: "[…] since the 1970s many former liberal arts colleges have shifted to primarily offering pre-professional majors." Even so, it must be said

leges sometimes provide professional orientations of this kind, it is important to notice that students who study these programs are at the same time provided with a broad and solid general education. When describing liberal arts education as non-vocational, it is thus important to notice that there is no clear boundary line between vocational and non-vocational education. What distinguishes liberal arts education from a purely vocational training is that liberal arts education, even if it offers vocational specialization, always puts great emphasis on the broadness of the education.

Liberal arts education has often been described as an education that teaches students how to conduct their lives, rather than prepare them for a specific profession. This emphasis on conduct and the formation of character clearly deepens the perspective on the ambiguity between vocational and non-vocational education. As Sheldon Rothblatt once put it:

> Throughout much of its modern history liberal education has been utilitarian, although concerned less with the direct preparations for occupations than for the active life. The antithesis is not as great as it appears, however. Conduct and career have not always been easy to separate. Often the two have been entangled, giving rise […] to moral ambiguity or contradiction.[29]

From this description, it is clear that liberal education should not be understood as an educational model estranged from professional life. Instead of concluding that liberal arts education stands in some principal opposition to professional training, we should perhaps say state that liberal arts education is in fact directed towards improving and enriching professional life. Through its emphasis of general knowledge and individual development, it also facilitates (and I will discuss this in more detail below) more mature choices among several professional careers than pure vocational training. One of the

---

that St. Olaf College, in comparison with other colleges, stands in closer connection to the traditional version of liberal arts education than many other colleges.

[29] Rothblatt 1976, p. 9 f.

most common arguments in support of liberal arts education is in fact that it opens for several career choices rather than just one. It must also be emphasized that the pre-professional function of liberal arts colleges is a very important factor. Liberal arts institutions often ensure students access to prestigious professional graduate schools, like Law Schools and Medical Schools. This is one important reason why people in the U.S. are in fact prepared to pay for the often very expensive tuition fees of private liberal arts colleges.

2.3 The implications of "general knowledge"

The focus of liberal arts education on general knowledge and its emphasis on intellectual and ethical rather than professional proficiencies can be further specified with reference to several key skills often mentioned in connection with the mission of this educational model. Kristy McNamara and Daniel Cover have described the goals of liberal arts education in terms of eight essential skills:[30]

1) Thinking and / or communicating clearly and effectively
2) Understanding the physical universe, self, and / or society
3) Knowledge of other cultures and / or other times
4) Awareness of moral, aesthetic and spiritual issues inherent in life and society
5) Searching for relationships among various forms of thought and feeling
6) Awareness of the intrinsic value of thought and learning
7) Independent action
8) Tolerance and concern for others

The features listed above give a fair perspective on the breadth that liberal education strives to bring about. In the liberal curriculum,

[30] Kristy McNamara and Daniel J. Cover, "An Assessment of Extramural Activities that Encourage Support for the Liberal Arts", in *College Student Journal*, vol. 33, 1999: 4, p. 594 – 607, quote from pp. 594 f.

this breadth, and thus these features are comprised in the so-called *General Education*, i.e. the *core curriculum* of college education, a core which is often, but not always, studied during the first two years in college. I will describe the *General Education* in detail in the next chapter, but I mention it here, since it is important to understand how *General Education* comprises just one part of the liberal arts curriculum. *General Education* constitutes what all students at a college must study in order eventually to be awarded a major, the major being the part of education where students specialize in one or more subject fields.[31] Liberal arts colleges comprise a combination of a broad and a specialized education, something that is easily forgotten since liberal arts education is often put forward as an exclusively broad and not specialized education. It is in fact both, or, as Ernest L. Boyer has pointed out: "[…] beyond acquiring competence in a special field, undergraduates must be broadly informed, discover relationships across the disciplines, form values, and advance the common good."[32]

It is important to notice how the above list conveys a modern approach to liberal arts education, an approach that differs significantly from the traditional shape of this educational model. In previous times, the *core* of liberal arts education was often oriented towards the Western tradition, and this traditional model of liberal arts education often referred to the "Great Books" of the Western canon.[33] "Great Books" is actually the name of one classic course of

---

[31] One confusion surrounding the term "liberal education" is that it is sometimes used as synonymous with "general education". It is important to notice that *General Education* requirements exist at nearly all undergraduate institutions in the U.S., and that students at these institutions in this sense get a "liberal education". However, when speaking of liberal arts colleges, it is important to understand that "liberal" does not primarily refer to the *General Education*, but instead to the fact that the college awards majors in the fields of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

[32] Ernest L. Boyer, "The Student as Scholar", in Farnham, Yarmolinsky 1996, pp. 145 – 155, p. 145.

[33] See, for instance, Leon Botstein, "Some Thoughts on Curriculum and Change", in Farnham, Yarmolinsky 1996, pp. 51 – 61, esp. p. 52.

study in traditional American liberal arts education. Naturally, liberal arts education today also teaches the Western canon, but nowadays the discussion often centers on what should be included in the canon, as well as how its status should be measured with respect to other cultures. This critical discussion is important and, in my view, must accompany any attempts to adapt models of *General Education*. In the U.S. it is a discussion that clearly reflects how liberal education continuously reshapes its foundations, how it constantly redefines itself with respect to scientific and cultural changes, both on a national and a global level, and how it actually, in a self-reflective way, realizes the critical thinking that it strives to convey to it students.

In the U.S., several attempts have been made to grasp the true essence of what general knowledge implies, and consequently what the function of *General Education* should be. Carl Bereiter, for instance, in his attempt to define and defend liberal education in the light of a rapidly transforming society, stresses *cosmopolitanism* as one feature that makes liberal education valid, i.e., in my understanding, a feature comprising several, if not all, of the skills mentioned above:

> Liberal education is essentially enculturation. It is more than the handling of a body of knowledge and wisdom, although that is a large part of it. That is the part that liberal education has in common with enculturation in all societies. What makes liberal education distinctive – what makes it "liberal" - is its cosmopolitanism. Liberal education initiates the young into a culture that transcends the particularities of their social and ethnic backgrounds.[34]

This argument is interesting since it tries to free liberal education from its traditional foundation in values associated exclusively with the Western world. Today, it is very common to associate liberal

[34] Carl Bereiter, "Liberal Education in a Knowledge Society", in Barry Smith (ed.) *Liberal Education in a Knowledge Society*, Chicago and La Salle, Illinois 2002, pp. 11 – 33, quote from p. 12.

arts education with the ambition to understand "the Other". This, of course, moves the emphasis away from, not only the context of the Western world, but from the ambition to put education in relationship to a purely American identity. Liberal arts education, in this understanding, clearly has ideological implications. Bereiter´s definition is interesting also for Swedish education, since it links up with the ambition to challenge canon, and since it provides an argument for challenges of that kind.[35] Apart from this, it provides a challenging view on how questions of ethics relate to questions of knowledge.

The reason I mention these arguments is that one very important aspect of liberal education is its floating and constantly changing identity. This ability to innovate and renew itself is actually one of the essences of the phenomenon itself. It is clearly reflected in both the developments of liberal arts curricula, and in the huge amount of critical commentaries and debates on liberal education. Since liberal arts education prepares students for life, it must always adjust itself to the society and the world in which the student will live. In my understanding, this mission is just as important as the foundation of liberal arts education in the Western tradition and in the tradition of "Great books".[36]

---

[35] For an interesting discussion on canon with regard to liberal arts education, see George A. Kennedy, "Classics and Canon", in Darryl J. Gless and Barbara Herrnstein Smith (eds.), *The Politics of Liberal Education*, Durham and London 1992, pp. 223 – 231.

[36] Cf. Martha Nussbaum, who has pointed at the importance of acquiring knowledge both about the Western and of other cultures: "Students in U.S. colleges and universities are learning more about non-Western cultures. Curricula that once focused exclusively on ´the Western tradition´ have recently made efforts to incorporate comparative courses and courses focusing exclusively on the cultures of ´the East´ in a wide range of disciplines, including history, philosophy, political theory, economics, religion, musicology, and literature. Even when courses retain a ´Western´ focus, they frequently incorporate a comparative perspective. Many people today are asking whether there are good reasons for these changes. They fear that by diluting our focus we will produce students who no longer grasp their

2.4 The debate on Liberal Arts Education

In order to deepen the perspective on central features of liberal education, it is helpful to give an outline of both the skepticism towards this tradition, and the arguments defending it. Such an outline provides a glimpse of the ongoing debate on liberal education in the U.S., just as it gives a perspective on the fact that a similar debate on non-vocational education is absent in Sweden. In my view, one potential reason for the increasing lack of interest in Sweden for studies within the field of the humanities is that teachers within these fields at upper secondary and university level have estranged themselves from a discussion on the ends of humanistic as well as a broad education. It is thus my conviction that teachers and scholars within the humanities in Sweden can learn from the American debate.

My understanding is that arguments against liberal education in the U.S. often have a utilitarian ground, whereas the arguments defending this tradition are often both utilitarian and moral. It is also common that arguments in defense of liberal education unite utilitarian and moral values, thereby pointing at the ambiguity of the relationship between the concepts.

One of the arguments against liberal education is that it is too expensive and exclusive in a society where the market economy demands professionally trained people. The modern economy has no room for what is often seen as an education for educations own sake. College training must, according to this view, be more effi-

---

own tradition. This is legitimate worry, and we should be sure that new knowledge does not lead to ignorance. A new and broader focus for knowledge, however, is necessary to adequate citizenship in a world now characterized by complicated interdependences. We cannot afford to be ignorant of the traditions of one half of the world, if we are to grapple well with the economic, political, and human problems that beset us." Nussbaum 1997, p. 114.

cient and at an early stage in students´ lives prepare them for the harsh realities of working life. This clearly utilitarian perspective is often countered with reference to what is actually demanded from the labor-market. For instance, according to a survey made by the *National Association of Colleges and Employers* in 2005, the skills most wanted of college students among employers were communication skills, i.e. skills truly fostered within liberal arts education. In second place comes honesty and integrity, in third and forth place we find interpersonal skills and ethical features. Here follows the entire list:[37]

1) Communication skills (verbal and written)
2) Honesty/integrity
3) Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)
4) Strong work ethic
5) Teamwork skills (works well with others)
6) Analytical skills
7) Motivation/Initiative
8) Flexibility/adaptability
9) Computer skills
10) Detail-oriented

A survey like this of course makes a strong case for liberal arts education, since many of these features are strongly pronounced within this educational model. At the same time, it must be said that a liberal arts education by no means guarantees these skills. It is sim-

[37] NACE, *Job Outlook Survey* 2005, www.naceweb.org/press/. Cf. Denise Ditmore: "Ironically, several studies have shown that many business executives believe in well-rounded education and would prefer that their employees have a traditional Liberal Arts background consisting of extensive studies in mathematics, science, and philosophy. Executives have found that employees with such backgrounds are able to respond quickly and easily to the ever-changing business world." Denise R. Ditmore, "An Examination of the Issues Facing Career-Based Curriculum Policies in Liberal Arts Colleges and Universities", *New Foundations: Supporting the Reflective Educator* [Online Journal], www.newfoundations.com.

ply oriented towards fostering these qualities. One overall impression, though, is that the broadness both aimed at by liberal arts colleges, and commonly associated with what these colleges actually accomplish, seems to be an attractive feature in itself among employers in the U.S. How employers in fact live up to their own wishes, is somewhat more difficult to find out. If we look at St. Olaf College, a survey has been made, which shows that 96% of former students are in fact happy with their careers.[38] Statistics also show that in 2004, almost 50% of the students had full time employment six months after graduation. As many as 33% of the students had advanced to graduate studies.[39] When speaking of graduate studies, it is of course again important to emphasize the significance of liberal arts education as a pre-professional education. Liberal arts colleges have a very significant status in the U.S., and they do provide graduate schools with a large amount of highly ambitious and successful students.

As for the utilitarian skepticism against liberal education, it is also important to take into account the changes of college culture during the latter part of the twentieth century. As David Breneman has pointed out, the 1970s carried with it a radical change in terms of society's demand for students. During this period, the need for college educated students decreased, and the demand for technically trained students increased. Many students with liberal arts education thus had to compensate their degrees with degrees in technology.[40] Interesting in this development is that, at the same time as liberal arts colleges lessened general education requirements and became more specialized, training schools increasingly integrated a broadness that once was exclusively liberal into their cur-

---

[38] *Colleges That Change Lives*, www.ctcl.com.

[39] St. Olaf College, homepage: "A record of the activities of St. Olaf students six months after graduation", www.stolaf.edu.

[40] David W. Breneman, *Liberal Arts Colleges: Thriving, Surviving, or Endangered?* Washington D. C., 1994, p. 9.

ricula.[41] This clearly indicates the overall importance and status of the breadth traditionally provided by liberal arts colleges. There are different views on how the amount of general education requirements has changed over the years. A common notion seems to be that during the 1960s and 1970s students were encouraged to choose whatever they wanted for their education. In the year 2000, however, AACU (*The Association of American Colleges and Universities*) made a survey, which concluded that colleges and universities had again started to increase *General Education* requirements.[42]

The fact that many liberal arts colleges have actually disappeared since the 1970s clearly indicates a certain disproportion between the educational system and the labor-market, but the threat towards liberal education is also discernible in the fact that many liberal arts colleges have more or less abandoned their liberal arts curricula.[43] Commentators often describe this as a consequence of demands from a more specialized society, and the demands from parents that colleges should prepare students for specific careers in the working life.[44]

---

[41] See Rothblatt 1976, p. 200: "[…] while the trend towards greater specialization in university education remains basically uncontested, and liberal education continues to narrow in subject concentration, there has been as opposite trend in vocational education. There the instruction has broadened."

[42] See *Association of American Colleges and Universities* homepage: www.aacu-edu.org.

[43] David W. Breneman, "Are we losing our Liberal Arts Colleges?" in *College Board Review*, 1990: 156, pp. 16 –21, p. 29.

[44] For a historical account of this development, see, for instance Frederick Rudolph, *Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636*, San Francisco, Washington, London 1981, p. 253: "Where highly publicized general education requirements reshaped the course of study in the 1940s and 1950s, less publicized erosion of those requirements took place in the 1960s and 1970s. When a faculty reached the agreement necessary to change the curriculum in any fundamental way, specialization was the most likely beneficiary. Senior projects, senior theses, reading courses, independent study, honors programs, and more demanding term papers, while narrowing the gap between the undergradu-

It is also a noteworthy fact that several colleges have in fact continued to call themselves liberal arts colleges, although their curricula have essentially deserted basic principles of liberal education, and turned into professional training schools.[45] As Eugene Lang has pointed out, this development has led to a widespread uncertainty as to what a liberal arts education really is:

> Patents on the traditional mission of liberal arts education have expired. Generic versions of that mission are now regularly included in even the most specialized undergraduate curricula. In the marketplace, meanwhile, the undiluted liberal arts experience is battling the pressures of escalating costs, rising tuitions, and increasing demands for career training as a primary component of undergraduate study.[46]

These comments clearly testify to the difficulties both to judge the actual status of liberal arts education in the labor-market, and to give a sound definition of what liberal arts education really is. My impression is that, since the *General Education* requirements within liberal arts education are traditionally considered as the foundation of higher education in the U.S., and since liberal arts education also has a ring of exclusiveness and thereby maintains a high status, it is important for many colleges to give an impression of being liberal arts colleges. Although they more or less have transformed them-

---

ate course and the graduate school, threw further out of balance the special and general elements of the curriculum."

[45] Breneman formulates the issue like this: "At some point, […] a college that is awarding most of its degrees in business administration, nursing, education, engineering, health professions, and communications is simply no longer a true liberal arts college. By my definition we are indeed losing many of our liberal arts colleges, not through closures but through steady changes into a different type of institution." Breneman 1994, p. 13.

[46] Eugene M. Lang, "Distinctively American: The Liberal Arts College", in *Daedalus. Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, vol. 128, 1999:1, pp. 133 – 150, quote from p. 133.

selves into vocational training schools, the label "liberal arts education" still functions as a sales argument in a harsh market of education. In the light of these developments, it is hardly surprising that Eugene Lang fears the end of liberal arts education: "[…] have liberal arts colleges lost their relevance and do they, *in terms of their traditional mission as liberal arts colleges*, face extinction?"[47]

During the last decades there has been a shift among defenders of liberal education from the use of moral to the use of utilitarian arguments. One typical argument based on a utilitarian perspective is that liberal education fosters flexibility among students, and that this flexibility will be an important factor in the future working market. Moreover, although liberal education has often been attacked because of its lack of vocational orientation, some maintain that it actually gives students a better preparation for working life than training schools. William Boyd made this point already in 1979:

> To assert the value of liberal education is not to deny career education. Rather, the value of liberal studies lies in their lasting superiority in preparing the individual for changing needs of life and work. Oversimplified, the purposes of liberal education are to teach the student to analyze, to synthesize, to comprehend, to explain, and to act ethically. Younger people face an average of six job changes in their lives. It is misleading to indicate that a job awaits at the end of any given curriculum. The availability of work is determined in large measure by the state of the economy, which because of its constant fluctuations, defies accurate prediction. Of course, we need vocational, technical, and professional education. But we also need general education. The unpredictability of the future argues for a more general educational process, which continues through life. From the sound base of general education, new information and new skills,

[47] Ibid.

> indeed new careers, can be secured through on-the-job training and continuing education.[48]

Liberal education is thus embraced as a generator of an indispensable flexibility in a rapidly changing society and before an unpredictable future. Interestingly enough, this is done, not only through the description of the different kind of knowledge it conveys, but also with reference to the continuation of learning throughout life that liberal education fosters. It is an argument, thus, that puts forward the importance of *life-long learning* within this educational model. This is often described as the power of liberal education to teach students how to produce knowledge, i.e. how to learn.

The importance of life-long learning, and of the analytical and critical skills that liberal education emphasizes, is often put forward in connection with technology, which, in face of its rapid development, has been extensively referred to in defenses of liberal arts education. See for instance E. D. Hirsch Jr.:

> The flaw in utilitarianism is its lack of utility for the modern world. Narrow vocational education, adjusted to the needs of the moment, is made ever more obsolete by changing technology. Vocations have multiplied beyond the abilities of the schools to accommodate them. What is required is education for change, not for static job competencies.[49]

---

[48] Willard L. Boyd, "Institutional Autonomy and Curricula," in Todd W. Furniss, and David P Gardner (eds.), *Higher Education and Government: An Uneasy Alliance*, Washington 1979, pp. 52 f.

[49] E. D. Hirsch Jr., C*ultural Literacy. What Every American Needs to Know*, Boston 1987. Russell W. Peterson, who notoriously has been defending a generalist approach to undergraduate education, sees the changes of the world as the most important reason for general education: "The escalating rate of change in the world increases the need for interdisciplinary training and action and for more attention to the future impacts of decisions." Peterson goes as far as to suggest that colleges of integrated training should "[...] produce professional generalists with Bachelor's, Master's and doctorate degrees in integrated studies." Russell W. Peter-

The importance and impact of this kind of argumentation becomes clear as it turns up also in a more contemporary context. Roger E. Herman's often-quoted article in *The Futurist* from the year 2000, strongly argues for the benefits of a liberal education with regard to future developments within the labor- market: "Tomorrow's world of work will be characterized by rapidly changing careers, shifting relationships with employers, and many other dramatic changes in work life. In such a dynamic environment, the specialization paradigm of a university education won't work well; a liberal arts education may be much more valuable." [50]

As can be seen, there has been, in the U.S., a trend during the last decades to criticize the narrowness of an all too specialized training. It is also interesting to notice, that this criticism has not only been formulated with respect to changes in the working life, but with reference to how society itself changes. Liberal education is put forward as "[…] an education that gives us tools to answer questions we can't yet anticipate, to meet the challenges of a future that will no doubt be marked by social, intellectual, cultural and technological changes as great as those we are experiencing to-

---

son, "Why not a Separate College of Integrated Studies?" in Mary E. Clark and Sandra A. Wawrytko (eds.), *Rethinking the Curriculum. Towards an Integrated, Interdisciplinary College Education*, Contributions to the Study of Education, Number 40, New York, Westport, Connecticut, London 1990, pp. 215 –226, quotes from p. 216 f. and p. 219.

[50] Roger E. Herman, "The Case for Liberal Arts", in *The Futurist. Forecasts, Trends, and Ideas about the Future*, July – August 2000, p. 16. Herman also states: "Already, new challenges and opportunities pop up practically every day in all sorts of organizations, and grasping these new opportunities demands an ability to think creatively. Insightful leaders now recognize that a liberal arts education prepares graduates to think more broadly, to conceptualize at a multidisciplinary level that's more responsive to the increasingly broad issues confronting people in all walks of life." Ibid. Cf. Herman's and Joyce L. Gioia´s more elaborate guide *How to Become an Employer of Choice*, Winchester 2000. See also Bobby Fong: "[…] training in a specific career is insufficient as preparation for lifetime employment." "Liberal Education in the 21st Century", in *Liberal Education*, vol. 90, 2004: 1, p. 10.

day."[51] Again, we face an argument that turns away from a narrow utilitarian perspective, and focuses on the preparation of the human subject for its endeavors within society.

In my view, these arguments, although they cannot be verified, are highly interesting with regard to the Swedish system of education. Not least since a similar discourse on contemporary and future society actually exists in Scandinavia. For example, in the Swedish Government Commission *SOU* 2001:13, it is stated: "Different studies show that working life today, beyond knowledge and skills in specific areas demand an ability to identify and formulate new problems and that the individual develops new knowledge and new skills."[52] The knowledge and skills mentioned in this commission are of exactly the same progressive kind that a broad, liberal arts education aims at generating. In fact, several of the principles associated with liberal education, are already stated in the Swedish *Higher Education Act*, for example in § 9: "Undergraduate education within higher education shall give students the ability to autonomous and critical judgments, the ability to discern, formulate, and solve problems, and an ability to meet changes in the working life."[53] The *Act* also states that within their subject field, students shall "[…] apart from knowledge and skills, develop the ability to seek and value knowledge on a scientific level, the ability to follow the development of knowledge, and the ability to exchange knowledge with people without special knowledge of the

---

[51] Stuart Y. McDougal, "The Unexamined Curriculum is Not worth Teaching", in *The University Record*, May 6, 1998, http://www.umich.edu. See also Breneman 1994, p. 14: "[…] an economic case for liberal education does exist, based on general skills of reading, writing, thinking, and analysis that result from such education, and the constantly changing nature of the economy, which can easily render specific training obsolete."

[52] The Swedish Government Commission *SOU* 2001:13, p. 11 (my transl.) In the original: "Olika undersökningar visar att dagens arbetsliv utöver kunskaper och färdigheter inom specifika områden förutsätter förmåga att identifiera och formulera nya problem och att själv utveckla nya kunskaper och färdigheter."

[53] *The Swedish Higher Education Act*, § 9, www.hsv.se.

subject field."[54] These formulations clearly stress critical thinking, learning and thinking abilities, and communication skills, all features essential to American liberal arts education.

Just as important as the shift, within the American discussion, towards a more utilitarian argumentation defending liberal education is the increasing tendency to promote necessary changes of the aims central to liberal education. In my view, this discussion is also important with respect to the Swedish context. This because any changes within the Swedish system of education, must take into consideration how the changes apply to developments in society.

Carol Geary Schneider has discussed many of the problems often associated with liberal arts education, and her point is that, in order to survive, liberal arts education must challenge its own mission. She speaks of the importance to "[…] foster and to champion a more engaged, integrative, and socially responsible approach to liberal education", and continues: "Our common purpose is to provide the advantages of a rigorous, public spirited, and intellectually challenging liberal education to all college students."[55] She also challenges the argument that liberal education is an expensive luxury, notably by expressing her conviction that today's economic reality demands the intellectual skills provided by liberal education. In addition, she emphasizes that modern democracy is dependent upon the knowledgeable judgment of its citizens, upon the continuous education of them, and upon their sense of social responsibility. Schneider, by this argumentation, takes a big step away from those arguing that liberal education is an end in itself. Liberal education, according to Schneider, must always be adapted to the existing social reality, and the renewal of liberal education must be

[54] Ibid.

[55] Carol Geary Schneider, "Changing Practices in Liberal Education: What future Faculty Need to Know", in *Peer Review*, spring 2004, pp. 4 – 7.

accomplished with respect to the principles of intellectual judgment, social responsibility and integrative learning.[56]

This reference to the importance of democracy clearly puts liberal arts education within the scope of its ethical mission, where one important goal is to foster responsible members of society (a principle important also within Swedish higher education). Martha Nussbaum, who also mourns the negative development for liberal arts colleges, is one of the commentators who have emphasized this ethical importance of liberal arts education. In her view, the downfall of liberal education no less than poses a serious threat to democracy:

> It now seems to many administrators (and parents and students) too costly to indulge in the apparently useless business of learning for the enrichment of life. Many institutions that call themselves liberal arts colleges have turned increasingly to vocational studies, curtailing humanities requirements and cutting back on humanities faculty – in effect giving up on the idea of extending the benefits of a liberal education to their varied students. In a time of economic anxiety, such proposals often win support. But they sell democracy short, preventing it from becoming as inclusive and as reflective as it ought to be. People who have never learned to use reason and imagination to enter a broader world of cultu-

[56] Carol Geary Schneider, *Practicing Liberal Education: Formative Themes in the Reinvention of Liberal Learning*, Washington D.C., 2003, p. 3 f. Lang 1999, p. 140, has also put the importance of social responsibility forward: "If liberal arts colleges *as such* are to retain a significant role in higher education, they will have to redefine their missions in contemporary terms. Beyond rhetorical therapy, redefinition will have to invoke a philosophy of enlightened self-interest that clearly makes social ideas and action and external engagement the subjects of aggressive attention. It must effectively associate both institutional and student objectives with those of the community and responsible citizenship. To achieve the development of students as the ´whole persons´ that liberal arts curricula are said to intend, classroom and campus boundaries must not limit institutional responsibility for intellectual growth and academic experience."

> res, groups, and ideas are impoverished personally and politically, however successful their vocational preparation.[57]

Nussbaum's argument is interesting, since it makes a connection between the narrow specialization of professional training and the threats to democracy. However, the problem, according to Nussbaum, is not vocational orientation in itself, but rather the loss of humanist perspectives that it entails. These humanist perspectives are important, not only for the personal development, but also for the political consciousness. Although the ideological situation differs markedly between the U.S. and Europe, I find the implications of these arguments highly relevant with regard to developments within the Swedish system of education. In the light of recent debates about the "crisis" within the humanities in Sweden, it seems highly relevant to discuss, not only how scholarly activities relate to society, but also how research and education / teaching, values its own ethical dimension with regard to the surrounding society and to global developments. Today, specialized education in a sense starts already at the Upper Secondary School in Sweden, and in my view, it is clear that this early focus on specialized knowledge potentially threatens to undermine both the ethical and ideological consciousness of students. The responsibility within the humanities should be, not only to reconsider its own identity and mission on a research level, but to recapture its position as an ethical as well as a pedagogical cornerstone within the academy.

In my view, it is important for Swedish educators to notice the discussion of the essential features of liberal education mentioned above, since they work also as arguments supporting education on a broad level. Moreover, even if the Swedish educational system can never adjust to the kinds of curricula employed within the tradition of liberal arts education, these arguments can function as support for the overall need to motivate students to gain knowledge outside

[57] Nussbaum 1997, p. 297.

of their urgent professional needs. On a hypothetical level, liberal arts education in a Swedish context has the potential to accomplish more than just to fill a gap of proficiency. Any discussion on the use of this tradition should be related to how different academic fields identify themselves and their educative mission in relationship to society. Even if the Swedish context demands different arguments, it is nevertheless important that a discussion of the ends and values of education can reach beyond the narrow scope of utilitarian ends.

Another argument relevant to the Swedish system can be found in the debate on who actually benefits most from a liberal arts education. As mentioned above, liberal education has often been criticized because it is an expensive form of education, and because of its tradition to educate upper-class gentlemen for economic leadership. However, American studies show, that contemporary liberal education is mostly beneficial for students from academically underrepresented groups. As demonstrated by Wolniak, Seifert and Blaich, African-American students and students with lower degrees from High School, are those who gain most from a liberal education in the U.S.[58] In my view, this is an important argument within the Swedish system as well, since Swedish higher education faces a development where many first-generation students enter higher education, and since universities and colleges in Sweden are facing

[58] "Liberal arts education has often been assailed by critics because of its high cost and its history of educating upper-class gentlemen as part of their preparation to take positions of civic and economic leadership. However, our study suggests that the liberal arts experience of a student and the liberal arts emphasis of an institution are particularly beneficial for students from underrepresented groups and for those who have less developed academic ability. The beneficial outcomes of a liberal arts education that we uncovered through this research do not depend upon institutional selectivity or institutional type." Gregory C. Wolniak, Tricia A. Seifert, and Charles F. Blaich, "A Liberal Arts Education Changes Lives: Why Everyone Can and Should Have This Experience", in *LiberalArtsOnline*, Vol 4, 2004:3.

a development where undergraduate education must adapt itself to the needs of several categories of students.

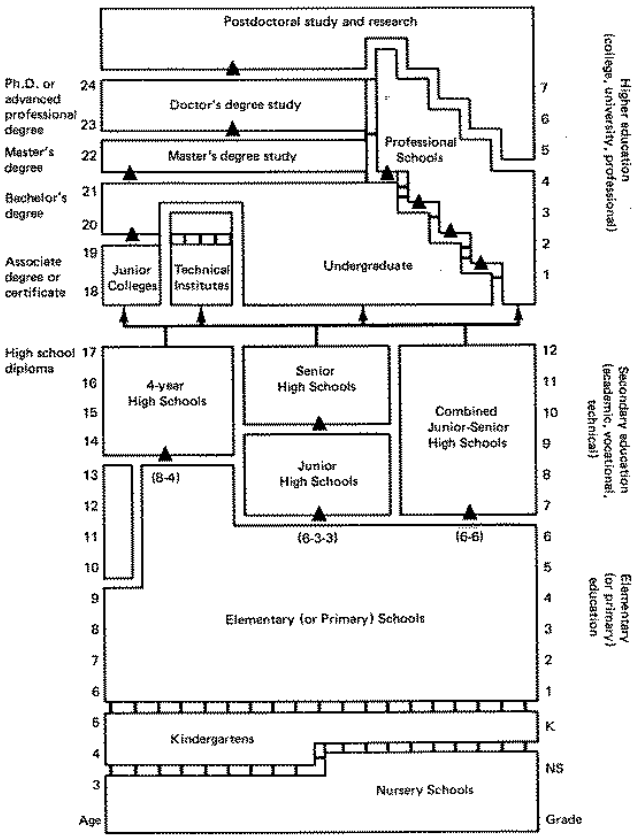
3.
The Practice of Liberal Arts Education

3.1 U.S. system of education

One important aspect of the American system of education is its decentralized character. Basically, this means that the federal government has almost no control over educational activities in the U.S. Some federal involvement can be noticed in the fact that the government provides financial aid to certain school programs, to research projects, and in the form of student loans. However, neither at elementary and high schools, nor at colleges and universities, is the curriculum controlled by the federal government. At elementary and secondary levels of education, the contents of the curricula are prescribed by each State. In higher education, each university or college is entirely autonomous with regard to the content and shape of its curriculum.

Although there are several exceptions, the most common case is that children spend twelve or thirteen years in school. They begin kindergarten at the age of five, and after that, they spend five or six years in primary school. Grades 6 – 8 are sometimes grouped into a middle school, but it is also common that pupils spend their sixth grade in elementary school and then go on to junior high school, which comprises the seventh and eight grades. High School consists of the final four years of secondary education. This means that students in the U.S. often begin their postsecondary education at the age of 18, as compared to the Swedish system, where students begin university or university college studies earliest at the age of 19.

Postsecondary education in the U.S. begins with undergraduate studies at colleges. Colleges normally award two degrees, the Associates degree (after two years) and the Bachelors degree (after four years). The following figure gives a graphic overview over the US educational system:[59]



[59] U.S. Office of Education, *Digest of Educational Statistics 1972* (OE 73-19104), Washington D.C., Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, p. 13.

3.2 St. Olaf College: facts and figures

St. Olaf College is a four-year liberal arts college of the Lutheran Church, and it is situated in Northfield, Minnesota. It has approximately 3000 students, and offers two different degrees: a *Bachelor of Arts Degree* (B.A), and a *Bachelor of Music Degree* (B.M.). The college comprises 44 different majors within the following academic fields:

1. Fine Arts
2. Humanities
3. Interdisciplinary and General Studies
4. Natural Sciences and Mathematics
5. Social and Applied Science

Apart from these majors, St. Olaf College offers more than 120 national and international off-campus programs, and it has been ranked as number five among colleges in the U.S. who send students abroad. Almost 80% of the students at St. Olaf graduate after four years, a proportion which is above the national average and far above the average of *public* liberal arts colleges. More than 90% of the students who begin their college education at St. Olaf return for their senior year. The comprehensive fee for 2006 is 32 800 USD, which can be compared with, for instance, the University of Minnesota, Morris, which has a fee as low as 9000 USD. In 2004, 62% of the students at St. Olaf received financial aid, by an average of 20 529 USD for each student.

St. Olaf College carefully collects information about what happens with students after their graduation. In 2004, 58% of the former students had employment six months after graduation. 33% went on to graduate school, and among these 4,5% to Medical School, 4,5% to Law School, 12,7% to Master Programs, 4,8% to Doctoral Programs, and 2,9% went to dual degree programs. The student faculty ratio is 12,5:1, and the average class consists of 23

students. The incongruity of these last figures relates to the fact that the world famous Music Program of St. Olaf, absorbs a large amount of faculty. The only directly vocationally oriented program at St. Olaf is the Nursing School. However, the college also grants teaching licensures.[60] St. Olaf College has students from 50 states and 28 countries. However, most of the students are recruited from Minnesota. The same is true of the public liberal arts college University of Minnesota, Morris. This can be compared to Carleton College (also situated in Northfield) which has a more elitist profile than St. Olaf College, and to a much larger degree recruits students on a nation-wide basis.

3.3 Degrees and formal requirements

A B.A. or B.M. Degree at St. Olaf College is accomplished when students have taken 35 full course credits.[61] Students who wish to earn both a B.A. and a B.M. must take 43 full course credits. The average of courses taken during one semester is 4.5 courses. Courses at St. Olaf College are categorized either according to the level of the course or according to which part of the education the

[60] St. Olaf College offers Teaching Certifications within the following fields: *Communication Arts and Literature*: English; *Dance and Theater*: Dance, Theatre; *Mathematics*; *Music*: Vocal, Instrumental, Classroom; *Science*: Biology, Chemistry, Physics; *Social Studies*; *Visual Arts*; *World Languages*: French, German, Latin, Spanish. *St. Olaf Academic Catalog for 2004 – 06*, p. 8.

[61] It is worth noting that at least 17 credits out of 35 must be earned at St. Olaf College. This means that students can transfer credits from other schools. An interesting aspect of the American system of education is that students can transfer even high-school credits to their college degrees. This is accomplished via the *Advanced Placement Program*, whose College Board offers AP courses. Many high-schools themselves offer these kinds of courses. As a consequence, American students can actually begin their B.A. studies earlier than at the age of 18. www.apcentral.collegeboard.com.

course belongs. Thus, there are three different course levels at St. Olaf College:

Level I Courses:	Introductory courses.
Level II Courses:	Require a larger degree of student independence.
Level III Courses:	Courses usually confined to the major and that require methodical and theoretical knowledge appropriate to the discipline.

At St. Olaf 18 out of 35 courses must be taken above Level I. It is also noteworthy that a minimum of 24 full courses out of 35 must be graded. This means that students have the opportunity to take some courses with so-called S/U and P/N grades. P/N (Passed / Not passed) credits are earned in courses that are offered only P/N. In other words, every student taking the course does it on an un-graded basis. S/U (Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory) grades are given when each student in a course may elect to take the course graded or ungraded. The P/N and S/U options involve certain restrictions.

The grading system at St. Olaf College differs significantly from the Swedish system. Grades are noted as letters A – F (except E), letters in turn transcribed into grade points, according to the following principle:[62]

Excellent	A(A+)	4.0
	A-	3.7
	B+	3.3
Very Good	B	3.0
	B-	2.7
	C+	2.3
Satisfactory	C	2.0
	C-	1.7

[62] St. Olaf College, *The Academic Catalog for 2004 – 06*, p. 47.

Poor	D+	1.3
	D	1.0
	D-	0.7
Failure	F	0.0

The grade points are in their turn calculated into a Grade Point Average (G.P.A). G.P.A. is calculated by dividing the sum of the grade points with the number of course credits taken. The requirement for graduation at St. Olaf is 2.00 G.P.A. Average G.P.A. at St. Olaf is 3.64.[63] The grading system at St. Olaf College, as at U.S. colleges at large, gets even more complicated by the fact that certain courses earn the student *fractional course credits*. One course is normally equivalent to 1.00 course credit, but a course can also be given as a fraction. For example, if the grade A is given in a

[63] Since this is a surprisingly high average, the issue of grade inflation deserves some attention. During my stay at St. Olaf, this problematic aspect was discussed intensely among faculty members. The discussion stands in close connection to a nation-wide concern about the fact that grades have continuously gone up during the last decades. Some commentators see this development as an expression of a general deterioration of college education. Mark Edmundson, for instance, in a much quoted article, puts grade inflation within the humanities in connection with the alleged transformation of education into a market: "One of the ways we've tried to stay attractive is by loosening up. We grade much more softly than our colleagues in science. In English, we don't give many Ds, or Cs for that matter. […] Along with softening the grades, many humanities departments have relaxed major requirements. There are some good reasons for introducing more choices into curricula and requiring fewer standard courses. But the move, like many others in the university now, jibes with a tendency to serve – and not challenge – the students." Mark Edmundson, "On the Uses of a Liberal Education. 1. As Lite Entertainment for Bored College Students", *Harper's Magazine*, Sept. 1997, pp. 39 – 49, quote from p. 44. It is important to notice that, although grade inflation is often presented as a major problem within the American system of education, grades actually do not seem to play such a decisive role in practice. Grades are just one factor, for instance, in the process of admission to graduate schools. Standardized tests, tutors´ opinions and testimonials generally seem more important than the G.P.A.

course which gives the student 0.75 of a full course credit, the credit point will not be 4, but 3. See below for a comprehensive account of this system:[64]

Grade/Credit	1.00	0.75	0.50	0.25
A	4.00	3.00	2.00	1.00
A-	3.70	2.77	1.85	.92
B+	3.30	2.47	1.65	.82
B	3.00	2.25	1.50	.75
B-	2.70	2.02	1.35	.67
C+	2.30	1.72	1.15	.57
C	2.00	1.50	1.00	.50
C-	1.70	1.27	.85	.42
D+	1.30	.97	.65	.32
D	1.00	.75	.50	.25
D-	.70	.52	.35	.17

St. Olaf College is a 4 – 1 – 4 college, which means that it has two 4-month semesters and one interim semester (in January). Three out of 35 courses must be taken during separate interim semesters. This regulation clearly fosters students not to concentrate their studies too much, just as it guarantees an essential continuity of the education.

Categorized according to which part of the education courses belong, there are *General Education* courses, *Major* courses and *Elective* courses. Since students at St. Olaf can combine courses in a huge amount of different ways, the proportions of different kinds of courses within a B.A. degree varies widely. However, the typical course of study at St. Olaf College looks like this:

[64] St. Olaf College, *The Academic Catalog for 2004 – 06*, p. 47.

General Education Courses:	14 – 16 courses	(14 courses required)
Major Courses:	8 – 10 courses	(8 courses required)
Elective Courses:	10 – 12 courses	(10 courses required)

As can be seen from this overview, the *General Education* courses take up a fairly large proportion of the education at St. Olaf.

The general shape of the curriculum and the course requirements at St. Olaf differs significantly from the Swedish system. At Uppsala University, a B.A. degree is taken in three years and consists of 120 credit points. Students normally study four courses each semester (on a 5 – 5 month calendar), each course earning the student 5 credit points (apart from some essay courses comprising 10 credit points). According to the decisions made with reference to the *Bologna Process*, the requirements for a major is that 60 out of the 120 credit points should be taken within the major, 20 credit points should be taken within another subject field, and the rest of the courses (40 credit points) are electives. The most notable difference is, of course, that within the Swedish system, there are no *General Education* requirements. This is mainly because Swedish students spend one year longer in Upper Secondary School, and because "general knowledge" is supposed to be accomplished during this educational phase.[65]

Since one of the starting points of my investigation was the presumption that many Swedish students are not sufficiently prepared for university studies, it is my conviction that *General Education* requirements should be discussed as one potential tool for improv-

[65] In Sweden, the common assumption is that Upper Secondary School should provide the core courses sufficient for higher education. The eight Swedish core subjects in Upper Secondary School are: 1) Swedish Language, 2) Mathematics, 3) English, 4) Social studies, 5) Physical activities, 6) Natural Science, 7) Religion and 8) Arts. See Högskoleverkets rapportserie 2001: 20 R, *Core curriculum – an educational journey: Description and evaluation of a liberal studies concept for university students*, p. 21 f.

ing undergraduate education at Swedish universities. Below follows an overview of and a discussion on the shape and function of these requirements. After that follows an account of *General Education* at St. Olaf College.

3.4 *General Education*: history, function and structure

The purpose of *General Education* is to prepare students with the basic knowledge and skills they need to complete their degrees and majors. It is thus a very important factor in the accomplishment of the breadth essential to liberal arts education.[66] The term *General Education* is often used as synonymous with *Liberal Education*, i.e. it designates the "liberal" part of an education that also involves specialization. However, it must be stressed that, in connection with colleges like St. Olaf, the term "liberal" rather indicates the *liberal arts* within which the college awards majors.

As was shown in the previous chapter, *General Education* requirements in the U.S. have a fairly short history, as they originally resulted from the replacement of the classical and religious curriculum during the nineteenth century. As requirements of Latin and Greek disappeared from university curricula, "[…] a group of educators calling themselves ´generalists´ united around the turn of the century, protesting against the specialization involved in the new Germanic-modeled University and the fragmentation of the under-

[66] Cf. Arthur Levine, *Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum*, San Francisco, Washington, London 1978, p. 3: "General education is the breadth component of the undergraduate curriculum and is usually defined on an institutionwide or collegewide basis. It generally involves study in several subject areas and frequently aims to provide a common undergraduate experience for all students at a particular institution."

graduate curriculum."[67] *General Education* thus took shape during the period 1880 – 1920. It is also worth noting that the *General Education* movement grew stronger during and after World War I, "[…] when a consciousness of Western values and national problems found expression in courses designed to orient students to their cultural inheritance and their responsibilities as citizens."[68] The idea of *General Education* developed gradually during the twentieth century, and as Frederick Rudolph has shown, institutions like the University of Chicago, by the adaptation of this model tried to "[…] retrieve for the curriculum a function that it had sustained since the Middle Ages: the cultivation and transmission of the intellectual and philosophical inheritance of the Western world as an instrument of man's understanding of himself."[69] As James L Ratcliff has showed, *General Education* became truly important after World War II: "Concerned and perplexed about how the higher education population in Germany and Italy, particularly the intelligentsia, could fall victim to charismatic and totalitarian leaders, the Harvard Committee on *General Education* provided rationale and structure to fifty years of curriculum development."[70] This alleged connection between academic specializa-

---

[67] Anne H. Stevens, "Philosophy of General Education", in *The Journal of General Education*, vol. 50, 2001:3, pp. 165 – 191, p. 167. It might be added that, just as *General Education* requirements, *the major* within the American system of education, has a fairly short history. See Kimball 1996, p. 17: "The academic major is a relatively recent innovation, having arisen near the beginning of this century as an outgrowth of modern academic disciplines and departments. Establishment of the major was also a reaction to the fragmentation of liberal education that arose in the late nineteenth century through widespread adoption of the ´elective principle,´ whereby undergraduates could choose their courses."

[68] Rudolph 1981, p. 248.

[69] Ibid., p. 238.

[70] James L. Ratcliff, "Quality and Coherence in General Education", in Jerry G. Gaff, James L. Ratcliff et al. (eds.), *Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum: A Comprehensive Guide to Purposes, Structures, Practices, and Change*, San Francisco 1997, pp. 141 -- 169, quote from p. 141. For a historical account of *General Edu-*

tion and ideological failure, clearly testifies to how strongly the ethical value of *General Education* has been, and still is, emphasized in the U.S.

As for the function of *General Education*, there is no general agreement among educators in the U.S. as to what this part of college education should be, and it is essential to recognize that these requirements vary widely, both in content and in form. It is also important to recognize that the disagreements surrounding the shape of *General Education* stand in sharp contrast to the Swedish system, where the core requirements of the Upper Secondary School are clearly stated in the law. Harvard recently published a report on its own development of *General Education*, where the historical disagreements on the identity of *General Education* are clearly expressed:

> "General Education" became the name for what specializations and electives failed to provide, the necessary supplement to the courses offered by departments. But there were different ideas about what was missing, and about how to provide it. Sometimes the supplement was imagined as "liberal culture," a cultivation of values distinct from, or opposed to, those of the professions; sometimes it was imagined as background or foundational knowledge, the prerequisites to specialized study. Sometimes general education referred to what was permanent or universal in human culture, and sometimes it referred to an awareness of public issues and the contemporary world. It has meant courses designed to promote personal and moral development, and it has meant courses whose purpose is to introduce students to methods of inquiry.[71]

This historical account provides an image of the different opinions that still persist as to what *General Education* should be. Jerry G. Gaff has given a comprehensive summary of the basic purposes of

---

cation, see Russell Thomas, *The Search for a Common Learning: General Education 1800 – 1960*, New York 1962.

[71] *Harvard College Curricular Review*, "Report of the Committee of General Education", 2005, p. 5 f.

General Education, an account that can be put in comparison with the description by Cover and McNamara previously mentioned:[72]

1. It is rooted in the liberal arts and sciences

2. It strives for breadth of knowledge, languages, and methodologies

3. It strives for integration, synthesis, and cohesion of learning

4. It encourages appreciation of one's heritage and of other cultures

5. It examines values and controversial issues

6. It prizes a common educational experience for all students

7. It expects a mastery of linguistic, analytic, and computational skills

8. It fosters personal development and an expanded view of self

As can be seen in this description, *General Education* theoretically carries a lot of promises, and it can also be described as torn between the ambition to be rooted in the tradition, one the one hand, and the necessity to adapt to contemporary developments, on the other.

As for the structure of *General Education*, it is my conviction that, in order for Swedish educators to learn from the practices of this system, there must be some understanding of the main varieties in shape of this educational concept. Three different main structures of *General Education* exist at American colleges: 1) core curricula, 2) distribution requirements, and 3) free electives. The following overview specifies the shape and purpose of these different models:[73]

---

[72] Jerry G. Gaff, *General Education Today: A Critical Analysis of Controversies, Practices, and Reforms*, San Francisco 1983, pp. 7 f.

[73] Arthur Levine, *Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum*, San Francisco, Washington, London 1978, p. 9.

1) *Core curricula*:
"Core general education programs are common, tightly knit, yet broad and often interdisciplinary series of courses required of all students."

2) *Distribution Requirements*:
"Distribution requirements are designed to ensure that each student takes a minimum number of courses or credits in specified academic areas."

Different kinds of distribution requirements:
a) Prescribed distribution requirements: The most common. It involves combinations of specified courses, student course options from short pre-selected lists, and a limited number of electives in designated areas
b) Minimally prescribed distribution requirements. Generally require few if any specified courses. The emphasis is on areas that must be studied. Students are required to take one course in any four of the college's eight academic divisions.
c) Recommended distribution guidelines. Generally the same as the minimally prescribed distribution requirements except they are not required. The student is given the option of satisfying the requirements or ignoring them.
d) Other

3) *Free electives*:
"In a free elective curriculum, no general education program is specified by the college. The student can create a general education based on whatever courses he or she selects. The student may also neglect general education."

These three models of *General Education* deserve some closer attention. *Core curriculum* clearly stands in the closest relationship to the traditional "generalist" understanding of liberal arts education, i.e. it truly realizes a common core that all students at an institution must study. It is important to understand that this model is *not* the most common in the U.S. today. According to Levine, it is practiced by less than 10% of the colleges in the U.S. The most

common model is instead that of the *distribution requirements*, i.e. a *diversified* core curriculum.[74] Since this model only prescribes certain *areas of knowledge*, rather than specific courses, it affords students more freedom in choosing their own paths of education. The *diversified core* is in fact a compromise between general education and specialization, or to put it more correctly, between *core curriculum* and *free electives*, and its closeness to the generalist understanding of *General Education* to a large degree depends on the areas specified by each college, and by the choices made by students.

Why are *distribution requirements* the most common model today? In my understanding, this model recognizes both the need for more specialized knowledge in society and in the labor-market, and the necessity to maintain the ethical and intellectual virtues fostered and transmitted by the tradition of liberal arts education. The model should not simply be considered as a concession to the demands of professional life, but rather as a device that puts the need for specialization within the framework of the traditional ideals of liberal arts education. It is thus important to stress that this educational model, while clearly emphasizing the needs of the *individual* student, at the same time sustains and teaches shared general knowledge. The *diversified core* lets all students adjust their *General Education* to their major orientation, and in so doing strives to establish vital intellectual connections between basic and specialized knowledge. Specialized studies within the major are actually being pursued, not as simple continuations of, but against the background of, and in intense interaction with general knowledge. In my view, it is clear that this kind of educational model indeed encourages critical and multi-disciplinary thinking. My understanding of major specialization in Sweden is that it often develops, if not in opposi-

[74] The distribution requirement was developed in 1909 by A. Lawrence Lowell, the president of Harvard University, and according to Kimball 1995, p. 192 f., the invention of this model was a reaction to the fact that "[...] academicians no longer agreed on the content or meaning of liberal education, except that it ought to include a ´major´ field of study."

tion to general knowledge then at least without regard to the relationship between specialized subject fields and other areas of knowledge. It might in fact be described as one of the main drawbacks of major specialization in Sweden that it is oriented rather towards the integrity of discrete academic fields than towards those areas of general knowledge where different subject fields meet and interact.

Another important aspect of the *diversified core* is that gives students time to delay their choice of major, just as it, conversely, lets them decide their major course of study at an early stage. Since American students begin college education relatively early in their lives and since they are largely differentiated as regards their ambition and capacity, these possibilities clearly testify to the ability of the *diversified core* to adjust to heterogeneous groups of students, as well as to different levels of ambition.[75] The *diversified core* thus stands out as a highly elastic and flexible model, making early specialization possible, yet within the framework of a common core. At the same time it is a model that strives to meet the demands from both the labor-market and graduate schools. One of the strongest arguments for this kind of *General Education* is, in my view, precisely this ability to meet the requirements from both professional and academic life.

The third model, *Free Electives*, can function as a tool for *General Education* only if the students themselves, by their choice of courses, lay the foundation for a broad education. As for the efficiency of *Free Electives*, if they are to serve the purpose of *General Education*, this is indeed dependent on the attractiveness of courses offered, just as it is on the level of ambition among students. One

[75] The view that the *diversified core* is more suited to heterogeneous groups of students than, for instance, the *core curriculum*, is supported by Levine, who maintains that, the *core curriculum* is "[…] best suited to homogeneous student bodies." He continues: "With heterogeneous students, the core curriculum runs the risk of duplicating the previous learning of the most advanced students and being too rigorous for the least well-prepared students." Levine 1978, p. 9.

of the challenges in developing a system where free electives can function as *General Education* is to invent courses that combine this attractiveness with the educational purpose of producing general knowledge.

In my view, the traditional *core curriculum* is a model ill-suited for the Swedish system. The reason for this is that it would probably be hard, if not impossible, to compel Swedish students into studying prescribed courses, and that it would be virtually impossible for faculties to agree upon the content of a fixed *core curriculum*. Arguments in support of the skepticism towards a traditional core are of course also that such a curriculum would be expensive and hard to administer, just at it would extend the period of studies in a manner less suited for, especially ambitious and well-informed students. These arguments are in important in the Swedish context, and also testify to the reason why Swedish institutions of education in most cases choose elective forms of *General Education*. These elective forms are clearly convenient within the Swedish system, since they adjust to a system where students are used to taking a large amount of responsibility for their own education. Uppsala University provides two versions of elective *General Education*: one elective course called "Core curriculum", and one year-long "College" program. The former is a 10 credit points course, which through its content stands in close connection to liberal arts education, in that it uses literature as a means to discuss the search for knowledge as well as basic notions of scientific thinking.[76] At the same time, it is a course which requires that students have already taken 40 credit points at the university. For this reason it stands out as a supplementary course, where knowledge breadth rather has the status of special improvement than of basic orientation. In my view, it is truly important that the university provides a course with this focus. However, if the university has an interest in using liberal arts approaches as a means for answering the deficiency of knowledge among students, I also find it essential to chal-

[76] Uppsala University homepage: www.uu.se.

lenge the notion of knowledge breadth as a specialized field, and instead consider ways to distribute fundamental areas of knowledge across the entire curriculum.

As for the other element of *General Education* at Uppsala University, i.e. the one-year "College" program, it is clear that this option in a productive manner compensates for a lack of preparation among certain categories of students. However, although the program invites students who themselves think they lack appropriate knowledge in order to conduct university studies; it is a program clearly focused on students who actually need to fulfill *formal* requirements in order to commence university studies. Consequently, it is not a program which addresses the deficiencies among students already attending the university. Nevertheless, I do think that the orientation of this "College" program is constructive. Through its focus on study technique, oral communication and writing, as well as on contemporary history, it truly realizes an orientation towards knowledge breadth, and towards several skills emphasized in liberal arts education. It must still be emphasized, though, that the "College" program reflects the presupposition within the Swedish system of education, that the knowledge deficiency among students is an anomaly rather than a rule.

If educators in Sweden are interested in applying *General Education* on a wide front, and not only within certain courses and programs, I do think that the *diversified core* is worth considering. One reason for this is that the *diversified core* realizes a model that, at one and the same time maintains the integrity of every academic field, and put these fields in connection with each other. By specifying requirements connected to certain *areas of knowledge*, rather than to fixed courses, this model makes knowledge breadth a responsibility for every subject field and every department of the university. *General Education* hereby avoids the risk of being reduced to studies within a specialized field. For the students, requirements distributed within a *diversified core* realize a system that, through its combination of guidance and selectiveness, makes

it possible for them to a design a *General Education* suitable for their own educational needs. I do think this is an important argument, since, when Swedish educators dismiss the value of *General Education*; my understanding is that they dismiss the model of a traditional *core curriculum*, i.e. a set of prescribed courses. And whereas a system of fixed prescribed courses would no doubt have a restraining effect on students´ education within the Swedish system, distributed requirements would not. One of the strongest argument in support of a *diversified core*, is in fact that it, through its distribution of general knowledge across the curriculum, and thus through its use of every academic discipline for the support of general knowledge, has the ability to integrate general knowledge in specialized education.

Yet another important argument for the use of models inspired by the *diversified core* is the fact that it puts specialization within the frame of general knowledge. If certain areas of knowledge could be specified, not only as prerequisites for specialized studies, but as concrete educational support for these major studies, it is my belief that this would have the double benefit of putting specialized knowledge in a closer relationship with other subject fields just as with the surrounding society, *and* strengthen basic knowledge, ethical awareness, and analytical as well as communicative skills.

In the next section, I will describe *General Education* at St. Olaf College, and make comparisons with other colleges. The aim is to provide a more thorough understanding of distribution requirements within *General Education*.

3.5 *General Education* at St. Olaf College

St. Olaf College has a rather unconventional approach to *General Education*. The college takes pride in upholding a large degree of *General Education* requirements, hence remaining in close relation to the tradition of liberal arts education. At the same time, as it is

stated in the "St. Olaf College Mission Statement", the curriculum is constructed with an "[…] overlap between general education and major studies."[77] This means that "[m]any majors and concentrations purposely help students develop competencies first introduced through general education."[78] At St. Olaf College, there is thus no clear line between the general and the specialized education, and *General Education* at this particular institution, in my understanding, cannot be seen as a reaction towards specialization as such, but rather as supporting different kinds of specialization. I find this interesting, since it is a model that, at least in theory, projects a relationship between general and special education that appears suitable to the Swedish university system (and to the principles proposed by the *Bologna Process*) with its traditional and continuous emphasis on special education. Swedish institutions of higher education, particularly research universities like Uppsala University, would benefit most from a *General Education* that did not compete with, but instead furthered specialized education.

Although it is denied in the *Academic Catalog* of St. Olaf College, the *General Education* at this institution clearly realizes a model of *distribution requirements*, i.e. a *diversified core*.[79] One special feature of its curriculum, though, is that within this distributional system, there are elements of what might be regarded as a traditional *core curriculum*. I will explain this overlap later on (see the chapter on *The Great Conversation* below). This is how the college itself describes the unique features of its *General Education*:[80]

---

[77] "St. Olaf College Mission Statement", www.stolaf.edu.

[78] Ibid.

[79] St. Olaf College, *The Academic Catalog for 2004 – 06*, p. 22: "[…] St. Olaf's General Education curriculum does not work by a distribution system (so many courses in certain disciplines); rather, it identifies an area of learning for General Education and sets out a series of guidelines which inform the construction of courses."

[80] "Distinctive characteristics of general education at St. Olaf College", St. Olaf College homepage: www.stolaf.edu.

At St. Olaf, general education extends through all four years of college. Some courses (First-Year Writing, Biblical Studies) are essential to the first-year experience and cultivate fundamental competencies—in college-level reading, writing, discussion, and research skills—that prepare students for later studies. They also provide an important experience of community with other new students. Other elements of general education are just as intentionally designed to be taken later in a student's college career, because these courses build on previous experiences, both on and off campus.

At St. Olaf, many courses designed for general education are multi-disciplinary; that is, several areas of knowledge contribute to understanding the topics of study. The general education curriculum at St. Olaf encourages students to make connections among the courses they take.

At St. Olaf, there is an intentional overlap between general education and major studies. Many majors and concentrations purposely help students develop competencies first introduced through general education.

At St. Olaf, students are encouraged to connect in-class learning, on campus and abroad, with important co-curricular experiences in the arts, athletics, service activity, other forms of experiential learning, and daily life.

As stated in the first paragraph, St. Olaf College does not separate general and special education in time. Instead of promoting a fixed and hierarchical relationship between different levels of the education, this curriculum tries to establish a dynamic interaction between breadth and specialization. At the same time, some courses are viewed as essential for the first year of study. Considering this structure, it is clear that the *General Education* curriculum at St. Olaf tries to adjust itself to a heterogeneous body of students, and that it supports the development of both well-informed and specialized students.

The following overview specifies the *General Education* requirements at St. Olaf College. Some information has been left out, as for instance the prerequisites for each course. This overview mentions the course requirement, the number of courses that has to be taken for each requirement, and the aim of the course in question:

I. FOUNDATION STUDIES

Course requirement	**Courses**	**Aim of courses**
FYW = *First Year Writing*:	1	Equip students for effective writing in the liberal arts and introduces writing as a means of learning
WRI = *Writing in Context*:	4	Enhance students´ writing competence and confidence in a variety of knowledge domains
FOL = *Foreign Language*:	3 – 4	Develop non-English language skills to an intermediate level, deepen understanding of language as a human phenomenon, and generate insights into a culture other than one's own
ORC = *Oral Communication*:	0.25 – 1	Develops oral communication competence and confidence
MAR = *Mathematical Reasoning*:	1	Develops students understanding of mathematics and mathematical problem-solving

PHA = *Physical Activity*:	0. 5	Provides participation in structured physical activity

II. CORE STUDIES

HWC = *Historical Studies in Western Culture*	2	Develop historical perspective on, and critical appreciation, of the major traditions, institutions, and achievements of Western Culture
MCS-D, MCS-G = *Multicultural Studies*	2	Develop understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity: MCS-G focuses on global diversity, MCS-D includes a component examining domestic diversity
ALS-A, ALS-L = *Artistic and Literary Studies*	2	Develop appreciation and understanding of artistic and literary forms
BTS-B, BTS-T = *Biblical and Theological Studies*	2	Introduce the Biblical tradition and develop a critical and coherent understanding of Christian belief
NST-x, NSL = *Studies in Natural Science*	2	Develop an understanding of scientific knowledge, the process of scientific discovery and the

		role of the sciences in society and culture
HBS = *Studies in Human Behavior and Society*:	2	Introduce concepts, theories and methods for the empirical understanding of individual and social human behavior

III. INTEGRATIVE STUDIES

EIN = *Ethical Issues and Normative Perspectives*	1	Analyzes ethical issues from a variety of moral and theological perspectives

The "distributional" aspect of this system is discernible in that the course requirements (in the left column) do not refer to specific courses within the curriculum (as within a traditional *core curriculum*). Instead, these requirements can be fulfilled through a large number of various courses and, in some cases, within a large number of subject fields. Let me take the *Writing in Context* and *First Year Writing* courses at St. Olaf as illuminating examples. At St. Olaf College, all students must study four *Writing in Context* courses (marked WRI), as well as one *First Year Writing* course (marked FYW). These courses are not fixed within the curriculum, but often change between semesters. In fact, college teachers are constantly encouraged to propose to the college new courses that fulfill these and other specific requirements. During the Year 2005 – 2006, St. Olaf College offered nearly twenty different courses fulfilling the FYW requirement. The following three examples give

a good view of the intentions and orientations of these courses in *First Year Writing*:[81]

READING AND INTERPRETATION. At the heart of a liberal arts education lies the ability to interpret—to make meaningful—a document, a work of art or literature, an argument, etc. The word interpret comes from the root "to negotiate," and how we negotiate the meaning of something is far from simple or straightforward. This course explores the methods, processes, complexities, and results of our interpretations. We'll explore the theories, values, and assumptions that have guided interpretations over the years, and we'll practice reading and interpreting a variety of texts: novels and poems, paintings and images, rock and roll songs, historical documents, even "facts." Students will turn their interpretations and their views about interpretation into a series of critical essays, with an eye towards improving their writing by reinterpreting and revising their own written work.

WRITING TO CHANGE THE WORLD. This section will focus on writing that tries to make a difference in the world. What does it take to get people to change their minds on an issue? What does it take to get them to change their actions? We will study guidelines for both logic and persuasion, and we will look at published models that have affected how others think or behave. We will cover a range of topics, including the environment, social behavior, and regulations that affect our everyday lives. The class will help students look for creative solutions as well as logical ones. Although essays will be the main form of writing, the class will also encourage alternative expressions, including poems, slogans, letters, and op-ed pieces.

INNOCENCE. Are we born with innocence, or do we acquire it? Are children necessarily innocent? Is innocence something adults sentimentally ascribe to children? Is ignorance the price of innocence? Is innocence dangerous, as much to others as to oneself? Can we regain innocence once we have lost it? Was there some point in history, or pre-history, when humankind lost its collective

[81] St. Olaf College homepage: http://www.stolaf.edu/offices/registrar/ge.html.

> innocence? Do men and women define innocence differently? These are the kinds of questions we shall consider in reading a selection of narratives and novels which, though differing widely in subject matter and tone, all in some way touch on the topic of innocence. In past versions of this course the reading has included *Genesis* 1-4; Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*; F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*; William Golding, *The Inheritors* and *Lord of the Flies*; Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*; Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*; Ian McEwan, *Atonement*; Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*; and J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Although FYW courses at St. Olaf are to a large degree taught by the faculty of the English Department, teachers from the entire college can suggest courses and be involved in the education. In the Year 2005 – 2006, for instance, FYW courses were given by teachers from the German Department, Theatre Department, Art and Art History, and even Physical Education. The broad aspect of this requirement is clearly discernible in the following description of the basic shape and purpose of FYW courses:

> A first year writing course may be taught from any disciplinary perspective, or from an interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary perspective. However, it must not be designed as a survey of a discipline or as an introduction to a major or a concentration. It does not emphasize disciplinary writing, which employs distinctive vocabulary, concepts, and intellectual frames of reference, and is based upon an assumption of specialized knowledge shared between writer and reader. Rather, it emphasizes writing addressed to the general reader, which employs no such distinctive language and makes no such assumptions about shared, specialized knowledge.

From this statement, it is clear that introductory courses of this kind, although they can be taught from several disciplinary perspectives, are not oriented towards specialized knowledge. They are courses that, apart from integrating writing and learning, emphasize the importance of putting knowledge in connection with the non-

academic world. It fosters communication, not with respect to the demands of the academic field in question, but with respect to the ability of students to make knowledge comprehensible to readers outside of the academy.

This can be compared to WRI courses, where the degree of specialization is higher. As is stated by the college, a WRI course "[…] introduces students to the distinctive vocabulary, ways of knowing, writing conventions, etc. of the domain(s) of knowledge represented in the course."[82] However, although specialization is increased in these courses, the college still emphasizes the ability of the students to communicate with the non-academic world.

Courses that fulfill the WRI requirement can, just as FYW courses, be given at almost any department of the college. For instance, at St. Olaf, there is a course in Economy called *Economy of Public Policy* that fulfills the WRI requirement. Even in Nursing, which is a vocational program,[83] there is one course fulfilling the WRI requirement. The important thing is that every WRI course in itself must fulfill certain conditions in order to count as a WRI course. These conditions are very extensive, but in short the requirements for WRI courses state that:

> 1) A Writing in Context course helps students write effective prose in a particular community of knowledge.
>
> 2) A Writing in Context course incorporates writing as a principal and integral part of learning.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Although St. Olaf is a liberal arts college, it offers some vocationally oriented programs. Apart from the Nursing School, the B.M degree (Bachelor of Music) is clearly a preparation for specific professions. St. Olaf College also award Teaching Certificates for majors who wish to become teachers.

3) A Writing in Context course must provide instruction in writing and must require students to revise their work in response to instructor feedback. [84]

Evident in the descriptions of these requirements, is that they emphasize, not only the outcome of the course, but also the pedagogical function of writing, as well as the stress on writing skills that the courses must accomplish. The descriptions thus involve both the teacher and the student and their expected accomplishments, just as well as the pedagogical idea behind the method. Just as in the case of FYW courses, the pedagogical idea is to integrate writing and learning, although on a more specialized level.

3.6 Writing Across the Curriculum

The model of learning described in the previous section is called *Writing across the Curriculum* (WAC), and has been widely used at U.S. colleges since the 1970s. It is a method which truly grasps the "broad" aspect of liberal arts education, since it aims at using writing as a pedagogical device across various subject fields.[85] As is

[84] www.stolaf.edu.

[85] This method is sometimes called *Communicating Across the Curriculum* or *Writing in Disciplines*, and it was imported during the 1970s from Great Britain, where it played a significant role during the 1960s. There are several discussions on the theory and practice of *Writing Across the Curriculum*. For a historical account, see David R. Russell, *Writing in the Academic Disciplines 1870 – 1990: A Curricular History*, Carbondale 1991. For a defense of this method, see Janice H. Peritz, "When Learning is Not Enough: Writing Across the Curriculum and the (RE)turn to Rhetoric", in *Internet JAC 14.2*, Fall 1994. A practical handbook has been provided by Virginia Cooke, in *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Faculty Handbook*, Victoria 1991. A comprehensive account of the method can be found online at the WAC Clearing House: http://wac.colostate.edu/intro. See also Charles A. Bergman, "Writing Across the Curriculum: An Annotated Bibliography", in *Writing Across the Curriculum. Current Issues in Higher Education (American Association of Higher Education monograph)*, 1983 – 84: 3, pp. 33 – 38, for an overview of texts discussing this method. It is worth noting that *Writing Across the Curriculum*

stated by St. Olaf College, writing, in courses of this kind, "[…] should be as much the active means through which learning takes place as it is the register of what has been learned."[86] It is thus a method that not only applies a unified pedagogical approach within different academic fields, but also documents knowledge, and brings attention to the different writing skills needed within different areas of knowledge. WAC thereby strives at increasing students´ skills in varying forms of factual prose.

It is important also that this method is considered, not only as a device for improving linguistic skills, but also as a tool for the development of critical thinking. Behind the use of *WAC*, lies a firm conviction that writing increases the ability to draw conclusions and to make interpretations.[87] It is also considered as an important tool for illustrating the structure of problem solving, among both students and teachers. The fact that St. Olaf College, in addition to the *First Year Writing* (FYW) course, requires the study of no less than four WRI courses is a clear statement on the importance given to writing as a tool for learning and critical thinking. It is also notable that writing is considered as a vital educational tool within virtually every subject field, not only within the humanities.

In my opinion, *Writing Across the Curriculum*, is a highly interesting method for the Swedish system of education, where the need for communication skills, and the need for methods of critical thinking, gets more and more evident. It is an attractive model also because it fosters not only students, but also teachers linguistically

---

has been discussed also in Sweden, in an article by Lars Brink: "'Writing Across the Curriculum' i skola och i lärarutbildning? Exemplet Kreativt skrivande 20 poäng", in Bengt Schüllerqvist and Roy Nilsson (red.), *Lärarutbildningens ämnesdidaktik. Artiklar om den egna undervisningen presenterade vid konferens 27 – 28 september 2000 vid Högskolan i Gävle*, pp. 21 – 46. Brink´s account, however, does not grasp the broad adaptation of this method across the entire curriculum.

[86] St. Olaf College homepage: www.stolaf.edu.

[87] See, for instance, Ann Berthoff**,** "Speculative Instruments: Language in the Core Curriculum", in idem., *The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models, and Maxims for Writing Teachers*. Montclair, NJ 1981, pp. 113 – 126.

and intellectually. My impression of the Swedish system is that language skills actually need to be improved both among students and university teachers, not only within the humanities, but in virtually every academic field. The university clearly suffers from the diminished importance of the Swedish language in Upper Secondary School, but it also suffers from the increasing internationalization of university education and research.[88] It is also evident that critical thinking in Sweden, although it is often mentioned as an important accomplishment, has no distinct methodology, and that there is even a widespread confusion as to what the term comprises.[89]

---

[88] Concerns of this kind have been reflected in several newspaper articles in Sweden. For example by, Sven Halldin et al., "Svenska språket dör ut på landets universitet" *DN* Debatt 2005-06-17, and Ebba Witt-Brattström, "Humanioran är satt på svältkost", *DN* Debatt, 2005-11-11.

[89] See, for instance Anders Persson`s account on how the Swedish *Higher Education Act* adapts a rather shallow understanding of critical thinking: "Critical thinking is problematic, both to define and to ´measure´. The problem with the formulations within the *Higher Education Act* is not the content, but the fact that critical thinking is regarded as a separate faculty external to knowledge and skills. Critical thinking is thus not considered as naturally integrated in education, but as something that has to be accomplished in order for people to obtain it." (My transl. In the original: "Kritiskt tänkande är problematiskt, både att definiera och "mäta". Problemet med högskolelagens formuleringar är inte innehållet, utan det faktum att kritiskt tänkande ses som en särskild förmåga som ligger utanför kunskaper och färdigheter. Det kritiska tänkandet anses således inte naturligt integrerat i utbildningen, utan det måste göras särskilda ansträngningar för att uppnå det." Anders Persson, *Nyfikenhet, kritiskt tänkande och kvalitet. Reflektioner över utvärdering, pedagogisk utveckling och kvalitetsarbete inom universitetsutbildningen*, Utvärderingsenheten, Lunds universitet, Rapport nr 96: 196. Stephen Brookfield has emphasized the importance of critical thinking as a process rather than as a faculty: "Critical thinking is not a separate subject taught in a compartmentalized way. Instead, developing critical thinking is a process underlying all educational activities. Helping learners acquire a critically alert cast of mind – one that is skeptical of claims to final truths or ultimate solutions to problems, is open to alternatives, and acknowledges the contextuality of knowledge – is the quintessential educational process." Stephen D. Brookfield, *The Skillful Teacher. On Technique, Trust,*

One important question regarding *Writing Across the Curriculum* is how liberal arts colleges develop the competence to teach WRI courses. I raise the question, since it is evident that teachers who normally do not teach writing, when working within this system, must also be competent judges of students' abilities to write. At St. Olaf, it is clearly stated that teachers who wish to give WRI and FYW courses must acquire a reasonable amount of knowledge about how writing is to be taught. The following statements specify this requirement:

> Instructors wishing to teach a First Year Writing course are urged to take a faculty development workshop providing a practical introduction to the teaching of writing. These workshops deal with such matters as designing a course, using class time productively, developing a variety of writing assignments, responding to and assessing written assignments, and integrating reading, learning, and writing.
>
> […]
>
> A Writing in Context course provides explicit instruction in writing. This may take place in a wide variety of forms: through short readings or handouts on effective writing; in individual or small group conferences with students; through class discussion of student writing or the quality of writing in assigned readings; or through lecture. Students must receive instructor feedback on their writing, either orally or in writing, and must be given the opportunity to respond to that feedback through revision of their work. The GEC urges instructors wishing to offer Writing in Context courses to take advantage of faculty development op-

---

and Responsiveness in the Classroom, San Francisco, Oxford 1991, p. 21 f. Brookfield further emphasizes critical thinking by describing it as "[o]ne of the intellectual functions characteristic of adult life", as something "[…] necessary for personal survival", and as "[…] a political necessity in a democratic society". Ibid.

portunities to improve their skills as teachers of writing and to increase their knowledge of the field and pedagogy of writing instruction.[90]

These are of course important statements. Any college or university that wishes to use *Writing Across the Curriculum* must indeed guarantee that teachers involved in these courses, actually have the competence to judge writing skills. It is a model of education that requires specific workshops or courses for faculty members. Workshops of this kind have occasionally been arranged at St. Olaf College, and it is my impression that events of this kind also have the positive effect of fostering productive interactions between faculty members from different fields and departments.

3.7 Oral communication

The issue of writing as a pedagogical tool also raises questions on how colleges use *oral communication* as a method for learning. If we look at the ORC requirements at St. Olaf College, it is somewhat surprising to find that students are required only to take 0.25 – 1.00 course credits in order to fulfill this requirement. Surprising because traditionally, oral communication, i.e. rhetoric, has been an essential part of liberal arts education. The reason for this deviation from the classical emphasis on oral communication is not easy to trace. My impression, which to a large degree is based on discussions with educators in the U.S., is that oral communication has become a matter for high school rather than college education. That impression is partly confirmed by the fact that oral communication requirements do not take up a great part of the curricula at other colleges I have studied. Morris College, for instance, has no oral communication requirement.[91] The same is true of The College of Liberal Arts (CLA), the campus based college of the Uni-

[90] St. Olaf College homepage: www.stolaf.edu.

[91] University of Minnesota, Morris homepage: www.umn.edu/morris.

versity of Minnesota.[92] On the other hand, Morris offers an entire major in *Speech Communication*,[93] and the University of Minnesota has both undergraduate and graduate studies in communication / rhetoric.[94] It is thus important to notice that some colleges actually live up to the traditional focus of liberal arts education on oratory skills, by providing specialized studies in rhetoric.

My inquiries on this issue also shows that the ORC requirement at St. Olaf is seldom realized through courses with explicitly rhetorical profiles. St. Olaf College offers only one course with this profile, a course called *Public Speaking* at the Theatre Department. Other courses fulfilling the ORC requirement are, for example *Talking in Japan* (Asian Studies), *Field Ecology* (Biology), and *Literary Studies* (English).[95] One important aspect concerning the low degree of ORC requirements is the fact that it seems hard for teachers to integrate this requirement within courses in a meaningful way. The following are the criteria that a course fulfilling the ORC requirement at St. Olaf must meet:

> 1. An oral communication course must provide explicit instruction in effective oral communication through assigned readings, lectures, class discussions, and/or other instructional features of the course.
>
> 2. An oral communication course must emphasize speaking and listening as principal and integral means of learning. The course must provide several opportunities for students to practice their oral skills in course assignments, and it must provide students with specific feedback on the development of these skills.

[92] University of Minnesota homepage: www.class.umn.edu/degree_requirements/ .
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] St. Olaf College homepage: www.stolaf.edu.

> 3. Oral communication courses may emphasize any of the modes of communication, including presentations, small group debates or discussions, and/or one-on-one communication.[96]

My impression is that the most common ways to meet these criteria are by group presentations and debates. However, not all the courses that fulfill the ORC requirement do in fact provide "[...] explicit instruction in effective oral communication", a fact that once again testifies to the importance, when using this method, to remind teachers of the requirements, and to instruct them in the use of oral communication as a method of learning. One of the things I have found inspirational with courses that fulfill the ORC requirement, is that debates actually stand out as an eminent tool for learning. Besides that debates make students talk, and train their ability to do so, they realize a method with the apparent ability to extract the essentials from a given material. Apart from this, debates seem highly appreciated by students. Since I teach within the field of rhetoric, I am used to applying debates. However, within the field of rhetoric, these exercises are focused on oratorical skills, and it is my conviction that a broader use of debates as a method of learning (within various subject fields) has the potential of improving processes of learning among students.

3.8 Religion and Ethics

As previously mentioned, the curriculum at St. Olaf College is, at least partly, a value-based curriculum. This means that within the *General Education*, we find course requirements like *Biblical and Theological Studies* (2 courses), and *Ethical Issues and Normative Perspectives* (1 course). The reason for this is that St. Olaf College is a college of the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and, as can

[96] Ibid.

be read in the Mission Statement, "[…] rooted in the gospel".[97] The *General Education* requirements in *Biblical Studies* (BTS) are not distributed across the curriculum, but can only be fulfilled through courses at the *Department of Religion*. However, it is important to understand that a large number of courses at this department do fulfill the BTS requirement, e.g. courses like *Classics and Moderns*, *Christian Theology in History*, and *Feminist Theology*.[98] Thus, it is again worth emphasizing that the requirements stated by the college do in fact admit a large degree of freedom.

Although religion does not occupy an especially large part of the *General Education* at St. Olaf, it is important to notice how this mission differs from other colleges with more secular profiles. If we look at, for example, University of Minnesota, Morris, we find *General Education* requirements with no reference to Biblical Studies. Instead, Morris offers expanded possibilities for students to choose courses related to "Ethical and Civic Responsibility". The following figure gives an overview over the *General Education* Requirements at UM, Morris:

I. THE FIRST YEAR SEMINAR	1 two credit course
II. SKILLS FOR THE LIBERAL ARTS	1 – 5 courses
A. College Writing	1 course
B. Foreign Language	2 courses
C. Mathematical/Symbolic Reasoning	1 course
D. Artistic Performance	1 course
III. EXPANDING PERSPECTIVES	8 courses (at least 2 credits each)
A. Historical Perspectives	1 course
B. Human Behavior, Social Processes and Institutions	1 course

[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.

C. Communication, Language, Literature, and Philosophy	1 course
D. Fine Arts	1 course
E. Physical and Biological Sciences	2 courses
F. The Global Village	2 courses (one each from 2 areas)
Area 1. Human Diversity	
Area 2. People and the Environment	
Area 3. International Perspective	
Area 4. Ethical and Civic Responsibility	

The more secular shape of *General Education* at UM, Morris can be compared with the curriculum of Carleton College, where there is a similar lack of requirements in *Religion*. Carleton has even taken a step further away from the value-based tradition of liberal arts education, in that it does not include *Ethics* in its *General Education*. At Carleton, though, we find a requirement similar to Morris´ "The Global Village", namely the "Recognition and Affirmation of Difference" requirement.[99] Both of these requirements stand in close relationship to the "Multicultural Studies" requirement at St. Olaf College. One thing that St. Olaf and UM, Morris have in common is the high degree of *General Education* within the curriculum. At Morris, *General Education* requirements take up half of the entire curriculum.

It is important to recognize that these requirements, dealing with ethics and multiculturalism, to some extent compete with the traditional *core curriculum*, which emphasized the Great Books of the Western tradition. If Swedish educators want to learn from the concept and practice of liberal arts education, it is vital that they too confront themselves with this conflict and the fundamental questions it raises. Should *General Education*, regardless if shaped

[99] Carleton College homepage: www.carleton.edu.

like a traditional *core*, a *diversified core*, or as *free electives*, be focused on the Western canon, or should it orient itself towards cosmopolitanism, i.e. towards the purpose of understanding "the Other" in the context and process of globalization? Is it perhaps possible to combine these different approaches? And how do they relate to the specific concerns of knowledge deficiency among students within the Swedish system? In the Swedish context, questions of ethics also seem especially relevant. Are Swedish students in need of ethical training, and is it possible that the field of humanities can regain its function as a conveyor of ethical discourse? In my view, adaptations within the Swedish system of *General education*, regardless which structural model is chosen, must face these questions.

3.9 Additional *General Education* requirements

One important aspect of the *General Education* at St. Olaf is that several courses satisfy more than just one requirement. This means that students can fulfill several requirements by just taking one course. For example, one course named *185 A – Literary Studies* satisfies three requirements: the WRI, the ORC (Oral Communication) and the ALS-L (Literary Studies) requirements. Another course named *Nazi Past in Film* fulfills the FOL-G (Foreign Language, German), ORC (Oral Communication), and ALS-A (Artistic Studies) requirements. At the Department of Art and Art History, the course *Intro/Art History II*, satisfies one of the *Artistic and Literary studies* (ALS-A) requirements, one of the requirements in *Historical Studies in Western Culture* (HWC), and the *Oral Communication* (ORC) requirement. By choosing courses that satisfy more than one *General Education* requirement, students can increase the amount of electives, and thereby choose paths that, for instance, serve to strengthen their major studies, i.e. their special education. Even highly specialized departments, like the Depart-

ment of Mathematics, offer some courses that fulfill several *General Education* requirements, for instance a course designated *Geometric Patt/Islam*, that satisfies both the *Mathematical Reasoning* (MAR) requirement, and one of the *Multicultural Studies* (MCS-G) requirements.

Although I will not discuss them in detail, some of the remaining *General Education* requirements deserve some attention. The above mentioned requirement in *Mathematical Reasoning* has caught my attention, since in Sweden, there has recently been reported that students attending technical institutions (like Chalmers University of Technology in) lack necessary basic qualifications. However, since this discussion concerns the demands of highly specialized institutions (with a vocational orientation), and since the issue is already being analyzed by the Swedish government (in the *Delegation of Mathematics*), I have not drawn any conclusions as to how the Swedish system could benefit from the American context. The same is true of the *Foreign Language* requirement at St. Olaf. Characteristic of this college is the great importance attached to language studies. The college requires that students take three or four courses that "[…] develop non-English language skills". In my understanding, the structure of foreign language studies differ significantly between the American and the Swedish contexts, and I have found no reason to intensify the analysis as to how the American model might contribute to the Swedish system. My experience is that Swedish students are relatively well-educated in the field of foreign languages, due to their study of a second (and in some instances even a third) language already in Elementary School. I have drawn the same conclusion with regard to the *Physical Activity* (PHA) requirement common at American colleges. In these cases, the cultural differences render any deeper analysis unnecessary.

As for the requirements of highly specialized subject fields at St. Olaf, it is important to notice that they are not distributed across the curriculum to the same extent as, for instance, *Writing in Context* courses. For example, at least one of the two requirements in

Natural Science must be satisfied within biology, chemistry or physics. However, the other requirement may be fulfilled through an interdisciplinary program. These regulations again testify to the purpose of this curriculum to meet the demands of both a broad and a specialized education.

The inter-disciplinary orientation of the curriculum at St. Olaf College can also be discerned in the requirements regarding *Studies in Human Behavior and Society* (HBS). The two courses that must be studied by all the students are to be taken in two different disciplines. It is interesting to note that courses satisfying these requirements are distributed across several academic fields: *Educational Psychology* (Education), *Principles of Economy* (Economy), *Environmental Policy* (Environmental Studies), *Human Geography* (Interdisciplinary Studies), *Sport and Religion* (Integrative Studies), *Marketing* (Management Studies), *Norway: Continuation/Change* (Norwegian Studies), *Images of Wellness* (Nursing), *Moral Psychology* (Psychology), *Comparative Politics* (Political Science), *The Arab World* (Sociology and Anthropology).

In my view, it is both striking and highly innovative that the *General Education* in this way put different subject fields in close connection with each other. The areas of knowledge prescribed by the college actually transgress the traditional border-lines between academic disciplines, and by this establish multi- and interdisciplinary orientation as a means rather than just as a desirable end of the education. I also find it admirable that these areas of knowledge are constituted both by methods of pedagogy (like oral communication and writing) and academic subject fields within and beyond the traditional liberal arts and sciences. Pedagogy in this model of education is clearly not regarded as simply a device beyond the academic fields of education, but is elevated to the same status as the liberal arts and sciences themselves. If we truly want to understand the statement that liberal arts education teach students how to learn, and how to learn for life, it is important that we acknowl-

edge this essential role of pedagogy within the liberal arts curriculum.

3.10 Multi-disciplinary General Education: *The Great Conversation*

As mentioned earlier, the distributional structure of *General Education* at St. Olaf is rather unique, since it creates overlaps between *General Education* and the major studies. Another particularity is that *within* the distributional system, there are actually elements of a traditional *core curriculum*. *The Great Conversation* is a program which constitutes such a traditional core *within* the *diversified core*. The reason this program fits within the distributional model is that it is optional. However, if students choose to study the program, they sign up for a whole sequence of courses, which in themselves form a prescribed *core*.

The Great Conversation is a program comprising five courses taken over two years of study. Its purpose is to introduce students "[…] to the major epochs of Western tradition through direct encounter with significant works."[100] By this, *The Great Conversation* provides a modern version of the traditional Great Books model.[101]

---

[100] St. Olaf College, *The Academic Catalog for 2004 – 06*, p. 166.

[101] The importance of this tradition is evident through the publication of *Great Books of the Western World*, a series of books published originally in 1952 after an initiative by Robert Hutchins at the University of Chicago. As Kimball points out, Hutchins belongs to the "[...] radical conservatives of liberal education", through his belief in the static shape of knowledge (Kimball 1995, p. 179), or as Hutchins himself puts it: "Education implies teaching. Teaching implies knowledge. Knowledge is truth. The truth is everywhere the same. Hence education should be everywhere the same.", Robert M. Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America*, New Haven, Conn., p. 85. It is also worth noting that programs like *The Great Conversation* are offered by many colleges in the U.S. See for example Gutenberg College in Oregon, www.gutenberg.edu, and College of the Humanities and Science within Harrison Middleton University, www.chumsci.edu .

It is interesting to notice how, within this program, intellectual fellowship plays a central role. The 66 first-year students admitted each year to this program at St. Olaf College all live in the same residence during the first year of the program, they are tutored by the same group of three faculty members through the entire program, and outside of the classroom, they gather for field trips, dinners, and theatre visits. *The Great Conversation* also covers quite a large part of the *General Education*. The successful completion of all courses fulfills no less than the following *General Education* requirements: *Biblical and Theological Studies* (one course), *First-Year Writing* (one course), *Historical Studies in Western Culture* (two courses), *Artistic Studies* (one course), *Literary Studies* (one course), *Courses with Writing* (three courses), and *Oral Communication* (one component), i.e. no less than nine *General Education* requirements.[102] The courses included in *The Great Conversation* are the following:

The Tradition Beginning: The Greeks and the Hebrews
Examines and contrasts the world views of the ancient Greeks and Hebrews, the history, society, religion, and artistic expression of each. Explores the polytheism, heroic ideals, experience with and speculation about war and peace, beauty and justice of the Greeks; considers the monotheism, covenant community, and prophetic stance towards the past and future of the Hebrews. Materials include works by Homer, Thucydides, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, the artistry of the Acropolis, and the writers of the Hebrew Bible.

The Tradition Continuing: The Romans and the Christians
Explores the Greek and Hebrew legacies in Roman society and in the New Testament. Considers various attempts to find personal fulfillment in the political life, in the moral approaches to life of stoicism and Epicureanism, in the teachings of Christ, and in their interpretation by St. Paul. Materials include works by Virgil, Cicero, Tacitus, Epictetus, the writers of the New Testament and

[102] St. Olaf College, *The Academic Catalog for 2004 – 06*, p. 166.

the artistry of Roman sculpture.

The Tradition Redefined: The Medieval Synthesis
Studies the expansion of Christianity throughout the Roman World and the synthesis of the Judeo-Christian and the Greco-Roman in the Middle Ages. Explores the development of a unified world view as expressed in religious and political arrangements of monasticism and feudalism, in Church and Empire. Materials include: works by Augustine, Benedict, Aquinas, Dante, and Chaucer; Gregorian chants, medieval drama, and the artistry of the Chartres Cathedral.

The Tradition Renewed: New Forces of Secularization
Examines the new elements of the tradition arising during the Renaissance and the Reformation which challenges the religious-based authority of the medieval synthesis. Traces the development of new sources of authority including the new science with its influence on art, politics, and philosophy. Materials include: readings from Machiavelli, Luther, Descartes, Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Jefferson, and Goethe; the artistry of Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Shakespeare, and Bach.

The Tradition in Crisis: Dissenters and Defenders
Surveys the revolutionary impact of industrialization and scientific inquiry in most areas of human activity at the beginning of the 19th century. Explores in detail the impact of Darwin, Marx, and Freud on the development of modern social and natural sciences. Considers various attempts to restate the traditional values of the Western tradition in the face of continuing intellectual and social transformations. Materials include: works by Darwin, Marx, Dostoyevsky, Freud, Nietzsche, Wollstonecraft; the artistry of Beethoven, Ibsen, David and Picasso.[103]

---

[103] Ibid., p. 167. Apart from these courses, *The Great Conversation* occasionally offers two courses studied abroad, *Theology and the Visual Arts: The Great Conversation in Italy*, and *The Great Conversation on "The Grand Tour" in Greece and Italy*.

As can be seen from this overview, *The Great Conversation* is a program that includes several subject fields within the liberal arts: philosophy, music, literature, art and religion. It is thus a truly multi-disciplinary program, and it uses historical chronology as the main organizing principle for its progression through the two years of study. It is not an *inter*-disciplinary program, if we define such an approach as including the transference of methods and perspectives between the different subject fields, but it is a program with the ambition to put these subject fields, and the different traditions discussed, in fruitful confrontation with each other. It thereby realizes the overall cross-disciplinary inclination of *General Education* discussed in the previous section. A certain inter-disciplinary approach can be discernible in the fact that instructors within *The Great Conversation* actually teach subjects outside of their own academic field. A teacher specialized in English literature, might thus teach a course where, not only literature, but philosophy, visual arts and music is taught. During my stay at St. Olaf, I was not able to trace any skepticism towards this educational flexibility. My impression is that teachers involved in the program find this imposed versatility indeed vitalizing.

In my opinion, Swedish undergraduate education (notably within the Humanities) could benefit largely from programs like *The Great Conversation*. There are several reasons for this. One argument is that programs of this kind, by their very content, are oriented towards developing well-informed students. They are programs which display a breadth which stands in deep contrast to the specialization of historically oriented studies at Swedish universities; just at they realize a depth that by far surpasses the level of ambition in the Swedish Upper Secondary School.

I also find the combination of distributed requirements and a traditional *core curriculum* manifest in *The Great Conversation* highly suitable for the Swedish system. The program is optional (in my opinion a necessity within the Swedish system), but at the same time, through its multi-disciplinary approach, covers a vast field of

knowledge never attainable at the level of Upper Secondary School in Sweden. Through its multi-disciplinary character, it also prepares students for mature and reflected choices of majors. Moreover, if it is combined (as at St. Olaf) with *Writing in Context* requirements and *Oral Communication* requirements, it has the potential to induce *critical thinking* both as a means and as an end. In addition, *The Great Conversation* also has the power to unlock questions of the ethical dimension of both knowledge and life. It thus carries a potential to make the formation of character an essential part of the education, in a way that a more specialized education can never accomplish. The fact that students within this program live in close proximity to each other during their studies, testifies to the ambition of the college to establish a learning environment where students constantly discuss and influence each other, even outside of the classroom. My understanding is that the formation of an intellectual community of this kind plays a very important role with regard to precisely questions of ethics and the formation of character.

One important question in connection with programs like *The Great Conversation* is to what extent they can be adjusted to a modern conception of liberal arts education, where not only the Western tradition, but also multi-cultural perspectives must be emphasized. Any discussion on the adaptation of programs like this must address questions regarding the Western Canon, as well as analyze the identity and function of the program within the core as a whole, and within the mission of the university. My own view is that programs like *The Great Conversation* can function as eminent discourses for the questioning of cultural perspectives and values, yet at the same time sustain the cultural legacy of the Western as well as of other traditions. These two aspects are by no means mutually exclusive. At St. Olaf College, multi-cultural perspectives and the focus on the Western tradition are not, at least not in any systematic way, combined within *The Great Conversation*. However, it is interesting to notice that the college offers two similar

programs, which clearly broaden the scope of the education. The first, *American Conversations*, comprises four courses studied over two years. The second, *Asian Conversations*, also includes four courses but is to a larger extent focused on language studies, just as it offers one course studied abroad. *American Conversations* shares with *The Great Conversation* an extensive use of writing as a pedagogical tool, just as it realizes a multi-disciplinary orientation by gathering perspectives from several disciplines, e.g. history, literature, art, sociology, political science, economics, and religion.[104] The most important point in this context, though, is that programs like this can be, and in fact are, constructed with focus on different traditions. A challenge within the Swedish context, which, in comparison with the American, has a different approach to the European tradition as well as to its own cultural identity, would be to construct multi-disciplinary programs that within themselves combine a multi-cultural and a traditional approach.

In addition to this, it might be said that, for the Swedish system of higher education, the important thing is not how the American tradition has administered the content of programs like *The Great Conversation*, but instead how the very principle of cross-disciplinary course conglomerates has the potential to vitalize undergraduate education. In my understanding, multi-disciplinary programs have the benefit of furthering the standards of, not only the general knowledge among students, but also the production of knowledge among the teaching faculty. The latter aspect is no less a matter of great importance than the former. Higher education in Sweden, in my view, suffers somewhat from the fixed borders and relatively sparse contacts between academic departments. These borders of course exist also at American colleges, but in my experience, programs like *The Great Conversation* have the power to provoke productive discussions and exchanges of ideas among faculty members from different academic fields. It is my impression that

[104] St. Olaf College, *The Academic Catalogue for 2004 – 06*, pp. 64 f, p. 81.

exchanges of this kind serve both the development of knowledge among teachers, and the refinement of *General Education* at large. If we are interested in learning something from the use of this kind of multi-disciplinary program, it is thus important that we do not blind ourselves before the complicated issues regarding Western canon and multi-culturalism, but instead try to recognize the intellectual and pedagogical benefits that can be gained from multi-disciplinary approaches already at an undergraduate level.

4.
Teaching

Teaching is one of the cornerstones of liberal arts education, or as the former president of Yale University A. Bartlett Giamatti once put it: "A liberal education is at the heart of a civil society, and at the heart of a liberal education is the act of teaching." Another commentator, Henry Crimmel, consequently concludes that the teacher stands out as the most essential part of liberal education: "[…] a program of liberal education not only requires a unique kind of ideal, a unique kind of institution, and a unique kind of curriculum, but it also requires a unique kind of agent, or teacher. In fact, the teacher is the most important factor in any program of liberal education."[105] In this chapter, I will convey my reflections on the role of teaching and the teacher within liberal arts education, using my observations from St. Olaf College. It is my conviction that this subject is of vital importance for the development and improvement of undergraduate education in Sweden.

4.1 Teaching and research

The first issue concerns the relationship between teaching and academic research at liberal arts colleges. As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this study, the tension between these two sides of academic work often creates obstacles within undergraduate education in Sweden. My experience is that many university teachers in Sweden identify themselves as scholars rather than as teach-

[105] Crimmel 1993, p. 253.

ers, and that the short time left for research causes frustration and consequently poses a threat to the quality of the education. Connected with this problem is the fact that teaching has a much lower status than academic research at Swedish universities.

Liberal arts colleges in the U.S. are institutions that, in general, put particular emphasis on teaching, rather than on research. Teaching skills are very important, for instance, in the process of evaluating teachers for tenure (I will return to that issue later). However, this does not mean that research activities are unimportant. In order to be employed as a college teacher, there is usually demanded a reasonable amount of research done by the teacher. At St. Olaf College, 91% of full-time faculty "[…] hold Ph.D:s or other terminal degrees in their fields,"[106] and although those "other terminal degrees" are not specified by the college, there is no doubt that academic competence is an important criterion in the appointment of teachers. The same thing is evident at Morris College, where "[…] 97% of tenured and tenure-track faculty hold a doctorate or highest degree in their field."[107]

The fact that scholarly qualifications are important in the appointment of college teachers, however, does not mean that college teachers must uphold a large degree of research during their employment as teachers. My understanding is that, for instance at St. Olaf College, research is more important as a qualification before employment than as an activity supporting educational practice. At the English Department of St. Olaf College, some of the teachers are highly involved in scholarly activities, whereas others do not perform any academic research at all. It is also important to notice, that the department itself neither demands, nor largely supports or facilitates scholarly activities. For obvious reasons, the department has no "doctorate seminar", but neither any "research seminar", i.e. a forum for critical discussions of the research done by faculty members. As a consequence, scholars must find or create their own

[106] St. Olaf College homepage: www.stolaf.edu.

[107] University of Minnesota, Morris homepage: www.morris.umn.edu.

networks for the exchange of ideas and perspectives regarding their scholarly work. It is also noteworthy that I did not, during my stay, notice any frustration among scholarly oriented teachers, regarding the lack of a research environment at the college. Every member of the college I interviewed expressed a serious dedication to their vocation as educators.

Since my own experiences are mainly from a research university, the lack of a research environment somewhat puzzled me during my stay. I am used to an approach to education where the notion is that research should nurture and develop education, and where education should be research-based. See, for instance the document "Goals and Strategies for Uppsala University", where it is stated that the primary aim of undergraduate education is to "[…] offer students quality, *research-based* instruction, availing itself of the advantages of a complete university, with ample opportunity to attain learning, broadened perspectives, and personal development."[108] Although this statement points at a central principle of undergraduate education, it is also clear that this principle forms one of the more salient paradoxes of Swedish undergraduate education. In Sweden, research is supposed to be the basis of education, but since many university teachers, as a result of their teaching load, barley have time for any research, teaching often threatens to be alienated from research rather than nurtured by it. The heavy teaching load in Sweden also makes it difficult for university teachers to update their knowledge of recent research. Still, the ideal is that research should develop teaching and that undergraduate education should be linked to research, and at least I am not familiar with any alternative approaches as to how teaching should be developed and refined.[109]

---

[108] Uppsala University homepage: www.info.uu.se.

[109] It might be added that in this context I am referring to the development of education and teaching as a development of knowledge, not as a refinement of teaching techniques, although this latter aspect to some extent is connected to the former.

One question that I have not been fully able to answer during my stay at St. Olaf, is from what, if not from research, college teaching can and should be developed, with regard to the content of the education. Some observations, though, are worth mentioning. For instance, at St. Olaf College, professional activities related to the field of education, but not realized in the form of research, are often seen as supporting educational activities in a positive way. For example, if a teacher is an author or an arts reporter, this is often considered as favorable for undergraduate education. One of the teachers at the English Department who did not uphold a doctorate, was in fact employed as *Writer in Residence*, and had been hired on his merits as an author. As it turns out, *Writer in Residence* is a common title or office at American colleges. This tendency to value qualifications beyond mere academic specialization clearly testifies to the orientation towards knowledge breadth at American liberal arts colleges.

Another notion at St. Olaf College is that the activity of teaching actually nurtures itself. I find this argument interesting and valid, since it to some extent mirrors my own experiences as a university teacher. According to this perspective, teaching involves and generates research in itself, often just for the sake of refining educational activities, but in the ideal case for creative elaborations of research studies. It might also be added that the American system is more advantageous than the Swedish, in that it allows teachers more time to develop education and research. My experience is also that American college teachers express far less dissatisfaction than their Swedish colleagues, something which indicates a situation where educational activities and the progressive development of these activities are regarded as important and rewarding.

One of the most important factors behind the development of teaching at American colleges is the fact that teachers are constantly encouraged to develop new courses within the *General Education*. It is evident that this encouragement prevents the curriculum from remaining in a static shape. It promotes change and de-

velopment, just as it nurtures an ongoing discussion about the aims and directions of the education, and about its relation to society and the world. Apart from this, the continuous development of new courses functions as an important stimulation for the development of knowledge among teachers. Through this demand for changes of the curriculum, teachers are encouraged to invest their own unique expertise into the education of the college, as well as to develop their own competence. It is my conviction that, within a research university, this policy of renewal would promote, not only a stronger commitment of teachers to their educational activities, but in fact a closer relationship between teaching and scholarly expertise. Since, at a research university, the ambition must be to secure this relationship, I also find it urgent to find ways to strengthen, not only the impact of research on teaching, but also the impact of education on research. Continuous and encouraged changes of the undergraduate curriculum would, in my view, support such a reciprocal development. It is an urge for renewal worth considering, not least within the *Faculty of Arts*, where fields like *Literary Studies* face a development where the identity of the subject field is questioned and where the undergraduate curriculum no longer reflects the actual research performed at the university. In order for research to vitalize undergraduate education, basic levels of education must be scrutinized and re-invented in ways that actually reflect the development of knowledge.

The relationship between academic research and teaching is a complicated issue, and in the U.S., discussions abound on whether and how these two sides of academic life should benefit from one another.[110] At the English Department of St. Olaf College, I have met strong defenders of the view that research is an important activity for the college teacher, but also faculty members with a dif-

[110] See, for instance, John A. Centra, "Research Productivity and Teacher Effectiveness", in *Research in Higher Education*, 1983: 18, pp. 379 – 389, and John. G. Gaff and R. C. Wilson, *The Teaching Environment: A Study of Optimum Working Conditions for Effective College Teaching*, Berkeley 1971.

ferent and more progressive view. The most common notion, however, seems to be that there is a relationship of interdependence between research and teaching. Teaching supports research and research supports teaching. This opinion clearly mirrors the predominant notion in Sweden. However, it is interesting to notice that numerous studies in the U.S. on this issue have in fact drawn the opposite conclusion: that there is no evidence supporting the view that research promotes teaching.[111] The most famous attempt to repudiate the notion that teaching benefits from research has been done by the above-mentioned Henry Crimmel, in the article "The Myth of the Teacher Scholar".[112]

It is interesting to notice that some commentators in the U.S. actually insist that specialization entailed by research poses a threat to the broadness of *General Education*. One view, for instance, is that research contributes to departments becoming more and more alienated from each other. It is also maintained that academic specialization may contribute to a development where teachers, focusing on scholarly activities, display an increasing lack of competence for the kind of interdisciplinary and broad teaching required in *General Education*. This hostile attitude towards research within liberal arts education is represented by Eugene Lang:

> Liberal arts colleges boast faculties that are distinguished by sustained dedication to undergraduate teaching and the values of a traditional liberal arts environment. […] However, many good teachers have been gravitating towards the scholarly and monetary rewards of specialization – committing themselves to increasingly narrow segments of their disciplines, giving their research priority

---

[111] See, for instance, Kenneth Feldman, "Research Productivity and Scholarly Accomplishment of College Teachers as Related to Their Instructional Effectiveness: A Review and Exploration", in *Research in Higher Education* 1987: 26.3, pp. 227 – 298, and David S. Webster, "Does Research Productivity Enhance Teaching?" in *Educational Record* 1985: 66.4, pp. 60 – 62.

[112] Henry H. Crimmel, "The Myth of the Teacher Scholar", in *Liberal Education*, 1984: 70.3, pp. 183 – 198.

> while offering only part-time instruction to students. Absorbed in their disciplines, more and more teachers confine their responsibilities to the classroom and laboratory, competing for student majors who can be trained according to research needs with slight regard for the content and direction of their nonacademic lives.[113]

The skepticism towards research displayed by Lang regards specialization as a threatening opposite to the broadness required at liberal arts colleges. This conflict clearly stands in deep contrast to Swedish circumstances. Since undergraduate education in Sweden is often specialized from the outset, it is only natural that scholarly activities should be held in high esteem. However, the skepticism expressed by Lang in fact touches one essential dilemma of higher education in Sweden, namely the fact that research based environments have a tendency to marginalize education and teaching. For this reason, I do think that the issue of the relationship between research and teaching has relevance also for the Swedish system of education. It might be argued, for instance, that since research universities like Uppsala University employ teachers, whose work does in fact not include academic research, there is clearly reason to discuss the status and function of the teacher with respect to the principles formulated by the university about the relationship between teaching and research. This discussion should also involve reflections on the relationship between undergraduate and graduate studies, as well as on how university teachers who perform no research, fit into a system where "research information" (i.e. the "Third Mission" of the university) is stated in the law. A reasonable

[113] Lang 1999, p. 139. See also ibid., p. 150: "Scholarship forces scholars so far apart that they can no longer understand each other. These people are clearly unable to help their students perceive the breadth of their endeavors. Until this situation is reversed through changes in graduate education and reward systems, general education will remain as it is."

measure would be that departments as well as the university as a whole made clear how it understands the relationship between teaching and research. If the conclusion is that the quality of teaching is dependent on scholarly activities, then ways for improving teachers´ possibilities to do research should be discussed. If, on the other hand, the conclusion is that teaching has an autonomous status, then reforms regarding the working conditions for university teachers should be analyzed. Attached to issues of this kind is also the question whether undergraduate education in Sweden should remain specialized, or whether it should meet the changes within Upper Secondary education (and within society at large), and adapt a breadth comparable to *General Education* at American colleges. If such a broadness of undergraduate education would be adapted (i.e. on a wide front and not only in the already existing "college" courses or programs at, for instance, Uppsala University), there are reasons to believe that universities in Sweden would need, at least partly, new kinds of educators, i.e. teachers prepared to instruct across disciplinary borders and dedicated to the adaptation of wider and less specialized perspectives.

4.2 Teaching load and course structure

American college teachers generally have a lighter teaching load in comparison with their Swedish colleagues. At some colleges, teachers give as few as four courses in one year. In such cases, though, the teachers are required to be involved in research programs. At St. Olaf College, teachers normally teach six courses every year (at the University of Minnesota, Morris, they teach seven courses). In addition to this come the four regulated office hours, used for individual instruction of students. This should be compared to the Swedish system, where teachers often give ten or twelve courses during one year, and where no office hours are prescribed.

As a typical case for St. Olaf can be mentioned the course *English 257*, which during fall 2005, ran between 2005-09-09 and 2005-12-20, i.e. for fourteen weeks. This course included 33 seminars, each 55 minutes long. The amount of hours for this course is comparable to a Swedish 5 credit-points course in *Literary History*. One example is a course in *20th Century Literature* that I occasionally give at Uppsala University. This course continues through four weeks, and consists of twelve seminars, each 135 minutes long. The Swedish course thus contains a larger number of hours than *English 257*, but is compressed into a four week schedule.

In my view, the American model has several advantages compared to the Swedish system. Apparently, the lighter teaching load facilitates qualitative preparations of the education, just as it encourages a more devotional and less instrumental approach to educational activities. Teachers are given time to concentrate on and develop their teaching. The course structures are also advantageous. The fact that American teachers accompany their students during the entire semester evidently leads to a closer relationship between the teacher and the students. The teacher also has more time to identify problems and deal with difficulties. Moreover, courses running through an entire semester, give students the opportunity to reflect on the content of the course for a longer period. They do not have to digest huge amounts of information during a short period of time. In addition to this, the shorter time spent in class, gives the teacher an opportunity to meet and discuss with students outside of class.

It can certainly be argued whether 55 minute seminars are really suitable for class discussions within the field of humanities, but in my view, it is clear that a model where teachers have more time to read papers and discuss with students during office hours, supports a less teacher oriented education. The American model thus realizes one pedagogic principle often described as desirable with regard to the reforms within the *Bologna Process*, namely the adapta-

tion of a *Learning paradigm* instead of an *Instruction paradigm*.[114] By using short seminars, the American system strives to establish a learning environment where students are encouraged to meet with their teachers individually and to pursue their studies out of their own initiative. The previously discussed method *Writing Across the Curriculum* also fits into this shift of pedagogy, since it implies that teachers often discuss papers individually with each student. In fact, just as several teachers at St. Olaf attest to, it is a system where the communication between teacher and student outside of class plays an immensely important role.

My view is that this structure is highly relevant within educational systems, for instance the Swedish, where increasingly heterogeneous student groups demand an education which provides various degrees of difficulty. My experience is that student groups in Sweden get more and more heterogeneous, and this development calls for models of education with an increasing amount of individually oriented teaching. The American model might seem unfair from a traditional Swedish perspective, not least since the more individually oriented education invites the promotion of talented students. My understanding, though, is that an education oriented more towards individuals, rather has the double advantage of facilitating both the development of excellence and the teaching of basic knowledge. The extensive seminar in Sweden clearly supports an ideal of specialization, where students are supposed to master the art of attaining large amounts of information and fairly deep understandings of that information during a relatively short period. It also supports a rational approach to education, where the communication between the teacher and the students is concentrated to the

[114] For a detailed discussion of these terms, see Robert B. Barr and John Tagg, "From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education" [origininally published in C*hange Magazine* Nov – Dec 1995, pp. 13 – 25], http://preznet.fhda.edu. See also Uppsala University, *Bolognaprocessen vid Uppsala universitet – fas 2*, p. 11 f, where the shift from "teaching to learning" is mentioned.

collective forum of the classroom. If undergraduate education in Sweden should be developed towards a more individually oriented and less specialized education, it is in my view important to challenge the "collectivistic" approach implied in the use of extensive seminars. It is also of great importance to discuss how the heavy teaching load of university teachers favors this collectivistic approach, and thereby raises one serious obstacle for the development a more individually oriented education.

4.3 Pedagogy

In this section, I will not give a full account of pedagogical methods within the field of liberal arts education. My ambition is to present my own observations, and I am aware of the difficulties to generalize from these experiences. My impression, however, is that teachers at St. Olaf College generally have a different approach to the task of teaching than what I am used to at Uppsala University, and my belief is that this approach provides a challenging paradigm for modifications of educational practices within the Swedish system.

Again, I would like to put my observations within the framework of the shift from an *Instruction Paradigm* to a *Learning Paradigm*. There are many principles involved in this shift, but in this context, I simply want to bring out the basic difference between the two principles, namely that within the *Instruction Paradigm*, "[…] the mission of the college is to provide instruction, to teach", whereas in the *Learning Paradigm*, "[…] the mission of the college is to produce learning".[115] Moreover, it is important to note that the production of learning within the *Learning Paradigm* does not necessarily imply the abandonment of traditional educational methods. The main point is that the methods used for the production of learning are governed by the ends of the education, whereas in the

[115] Barr and Tagg 1995, www.preznet.fhda.edu.

Instruction Paradigm, the methods used coincide with the educational aims. In order to produce learning, educators within the *Learning Paradigm* do not restrict themselves to *transferring* knowledge, but instead have the ambition to "[…] create environments and experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves, to make students members of communities of learners that make discoveries and solve problems."[116]

In my understanding, the *General Education* requirements of the St. Olaf curriculum functions as an ideal platform for the realization of a *Learning Paradigm*. This is evident in the orientation within this curriculum towards *integrative learning*, i.e. the ambition, "[…] to foster students´ abilities to integrate their learning across contexts and over time,"[117] i.e. the students´ abilities to make connections and use knowledge and skills in different contexts. Methods like *Writing Across the Curriculum* and programs like *The Great Conversation*, to a large degree foster critical thinking, self-reflection, and multi-disciplinary understanding, and thus aim at putting knowledge in a context wider than the subject field in question.

---

[116] Ibid.

[117] Mary Taylor Huber and Pat Hutchings, *Integrative Learning: Mapping the terrain*, Association of American Colleges and Universities, Washington, DC 2004, p. 1. My understanding of *integrative learning* also builds on the statement provided by the *Association of American Colleges and Universities* and the *Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*: "Integrative learning comes in many varieties: connecting skills and knowledge from multiple sources and experiences; applying theory to practice in various settings; utilizing diverse and even contradictory points of view; and, understanding issues and positions contextually. Significant knowledge within individual disciplines serves as the foundation, but integrative learning goes beyond academic boundaries. Indeed, integrative experiences often occur as learners address real-world problems, unscripted and sufficiently broad to require multiple areas of knowledge and multiple modes of inquiry, offering multiple solutions and benefiting from multiple perspectives." www.carnegiefoundation.org.

It is worth noting that St. Olaf College in fact has a special C*enter for Integrative Studies*, specifically dedicated to the implementation of integrative learning. In practice, this means that the center provides "[…] administrative and pedagogical support for students who wish to design individualized, integrative majors,"[118] but it also implies that the college has developed a very conscious attitude towards the concept of integrative learning. See, for instance, the following statement made by the C*enter for Integrative Studies*: "In the CIS, 'integrative studies' refers to learning that intentionally combines diverse methods, experiences, styles of learning, subject matters, departmental resources, or extracurricular resources in ways consistent with the educational goals of individual students and the standards of the college."[119]

Although St. Olaf College has concentrated the integrative aspect of education to CIS, it is my understanding that the G*eneral Education* at St. Olaf in itself invites students to experience *integrative learning*, and that this pedagogical model is widely applied by the college faculty. As for the teachers´ relationship to this model, my impression is that they largely, in their way of teaching, en-

[118] St. Olaf College homepage: www.stolaf.edu.

[119] St. Olaf College homepage: www.stolaf.edu. The C*enter for Integrative Studies* also provides a more detailed definition of integrative learning: "Integrative learning refers both to an intellectual and to a civic opportunity. As an intellectual opportunity, integrative learning involves the practice of recognizing and articulating relationships among subject matters, and applying learning from one context to another. It also involves building bridges between academic learning and the wider world, between public issues and personal experience. Integrative learning may take different forms in different students' careers -- for example, the integration of methods employed in different disciplines for the study of a single subject; or the integration of different kinds of experiences in classrooms, laboratories, internships, or study abroad; or the integration of academic approaches into wider public conversations. As a civic opportunity, integrative learning relies on connections built between distinct communities. So integrative learning might arise from links between the academic setting on campus and other settings in business communities, primary or secondary schools, farms, government, churches, academic apprenticeships, or a host of other possibilities." Ibid.

courage and support this curricular inclination towards an integrative aspect.

The most apparent evidence of this is that the teachers I have observed do not, in class, devote themselves to conveying scientifically based and systematic understandings of the material they teach. Scientific terminology, method and theory has a largely subordinate status in the education, and instead of providing scholarly understandings of the issues at hand, teachers to a great extent put knowledge in relation to the living reality and to the students´ own lives and experiences. Knowledge is produced with regard to the demands of the students rather than to the demands of the academic disciplines. In this way, the education becomes much less specialized and overall more simplified than the education I know from Uppsala University. However, it also stands out as more accessible than traditional research-based education. More than towards abstraction or systematized representations of knowledge, the discussions in class at St. Olaf College are directed towards the framework of everyday life, towards the world as recognized by the students, and towards problems as recognized by the students. It is also within the context of the students´ own experiences that the knowledge acquired is can be put in interaction with knowledge and perspectives from other fields. It is thus an approach which strives towards developing the processes of knowledge already active within the individual, rather than towards introducing knowledge as something that the student must attain.[120] Students are thus challenged and stimulated into making connections and pro-

[120] In this manner, the teaching techniques I have observed can be put in relation to theoretical accounts of how critical thinking can be promoted. See for instance Brookfield 1991, p. 172: "My primary function as a teacher is to encourage critical thinking – something I suspect is an organizing principle for teachers across many academic disciplines and subject boundaries. More than any other factor, it is a teacher's willingness to display the habits of critical questioning towards his or her own ideas and actions that encourages these same habits in students."

ducing knowledge, just as their inherent desire for knowledge is being encouraged.

My understanding of this pedagogical approach is that it is clearly elaborated with respect to what knowledge can accomplish for the student, and not with respect to how well the student can adjust his or her thinking to the academic discipline in question (although the latter inclination is more evident within major studies). At the same time, it must be stressed that this approach is typical for the *discussions in class* that I have observed in the U.S., and not necessarily for the tests and examinations that students must pass. Some of these examinations, like quizzes and final exams, are what I consider as conventional tests of knowledge. However, it is also evident that the large amount of assignments given to the students during courses contains exercises whose purpose is to help students produce knowledge instead of just accounting for it. The continuous flow of short papers accompanied by individual guidance clearly attests to this creative aspect of learning, and to an education that emphasizes knowledge as a process. Journal writing is another exercise oriented towards connecting knowledge to the student's own frame of references. An extensive use of poster exhibitions combined with oral presentations and discussions among students just as well shows how the production of knowledge is a central feature within this model of education. Something that was discussed during my stay at St. Olaf College was ways to initiate student research at the English Department.[121]

[121] It might be added that this discussions was met by a large amount of skepticism among some teachers at the English Department. This skepticism is recognizable within the Swedish system as well, where student research is generally more accepted within the empirical sciences, than within the humanities. My view is that research collaborations (intended for publication) between scholars and students are not possible within the humanities in Sweden. However, this should not prevent teachers from discussing models for how different forms of student research can be developed. One first measure in such a discussion should concern definitions of this kind of research. For information on the student research program initiated by the University of Minnesota, see http://www.urop.umn.edu.

My impression of this pedagogical approach and these methods for the production of knowledge is that they altogether differ significantly from the Swedish system. I also do not think that all of the methods used within the American system are suitable for Swedish conditions. Poster exhibitions, for instance, belong to more juvenile stages of education within the Swedish system. However, more important than to measure the external means of pedagogy, is to analyze how the contextualization of knowledge with regard to the students´ own experiences and needs, can function within the Swedish system. I consider such an analysis vital, since teaching at Swedish universities has traditionally been conducted with respect to the demands and stipulations of the academic disciplines, rather than with respect to the personal development of the student. Again, one of the most efficient ways to create a learning environment where the process of learning is being emphasized is, in my view, to promote a system where learning activities of the student outside of class are being encouraged. Consequently, I find the great number of various assignments given to students in the U.S. positive, since they aim at activating the students own production of knowledge, and provide them with an opportunity to reflect upon how knowledge relates to their own needs and ambitions.

Teachers at the English Department of St. Olaf College conduct their education through lectures and seminars as well as through workshops. The distribution of these forms of education is not regulated; instead, teachers themselves decide when to apply the different kinds. My impression is that the seminar is by far the most common model for education at St. Olaf. Many teachers include lecturing parts in their seminars, but essential to the education I have observed are the discussions with students. Another impression is that American college teachers have more freedom to shape both the content and the form of their courses in comparison with teachers in Sweden. Teachers at St. Olaf College, for instance, have the opportunity to release students from classroom activities three or four times each semester. This free time is usually filled with

other activities connected to the course. The purpose of this freedom is also to orient education towards learning rather than teaching. Yet another expression of this orientation is observable in the large amount of "educational" forums outside of class at St. Olaf College. Extra-curricular events, the engagement in community life, student associations of different kinds; all these parts of campus life contribute to create a learning environment that sustains the integration and contextualization of knowledge.

"Learning environment" is an important term at liberal arts colleges, and it is worth stressing how it is often referred to as a key concept in accounts of the shift from an *Instruction Paradigm* to a *Learning Paradigm*. Barr and Tagg have emphasized the great variety of educational approaches within the *Learning Paradigm*, and put these in connection with the multiple learning environments established by colleges:

> The college aims [...] to create a series of ever more powerful learning environments. The Learning Paradigm does not limit institutions to a single means for empowering students to learn; within its framework, effective learning technologies are continually identified, developed, tested, implemented, and assessed against one another. The aim in the Learning Paradigm is not so much to improve the quality of instruction – although that is not irrelevant – as it is to improve continuously the quality of learning for students individually and in the aggregate.[122]

Interesting in this account is how it stresses the quality of learning before the quality of instruction, a fact that testifies to how, within the *Learning Paradigm*, the quality of the education is not put forward as wholly dependent on teaching itself. It is an interesting statement, since at Swedish universities; the quality of education is often seen as a direct reflection of the formal competence and the formal pedagogical qualifications of university teachers. Although

[122] Barr and Tagg, http://preznet.fhda.edu.

Barr and Tagg do not specify exactly how the learning environments at colleges are shaped, I find it challenging to reflect upon this shift of focus from the teacher as a conveyor of knowledge to the educational institution as a stimulating forum for the development of knowledge. It is a shift that clearly supports an approach where teachers should facilitate the communication between departments and various subject fields, but also where students should be encouraged to produce knowledge in closer interaction with each other. In my view, this is an approach that ought to be addressed more thoroughly within, for instance, the "Teacher Training Course" at Uppsala University.

It is also important to notice how the learning environments are effects of the college campus as a "society". In my view, it is hard, if not impossible to re-create this unique campus culture at Swedish universities. This clearly raises one obstacle for developing the kind of learning environment that I have observed at St. Olaf College. One step towards strengthening the campus as a learning-environment in Sweden would, in my view, be to facilitate the possibility for students and teachers to meet outside of class. Inherent in the learning-environment established at American campuses is the principle that meetings outside of class are just as important as scheduled education. One obvious way to accomplish an environment of this kind in Sweden would, in my view, be to diminish the significance of the extensive seminar.

The importance given to the communication between the teacher and student in the U.S. can also be observed in the system of *advising* practiced at colleges like St. Olaf. This is a very important part of college education. Academic advising was adapted within the American system of education already in 1889, at John Hopkins University.[123] It was initially applied as a means for creating a closer relationship between teacher and student. The idea was to lift the student to the intellectual heights of the faculty mem-

[123] Thomas J. Grites, *Academic advising: Getting us through the eighties*, American Association of Higher Education, Research Report No. 7, Washington, DC 1979.

bers. During the twentieth century, it became evident that many students actually needed help with their choice of education, a fact still valid today. After World War II, for instance, many first-generation students with no connection to the academic environment entered the system of education, and advising developed as a means for introducing students to the academic system.[124] During the latter part of the nineteenth century, though, advising has more and more developed into a tool for education. Burns B. Crookston thus describes academic advising as "[…] not only concerned with a specific personal or vocational decision but also with facilitating the student's rational process, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavior awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills."[125]

My impression is that academic advising today fills a very important function at American colleges, both as a means for information and as an educational tool. The main reason is because curricula of American colleges are very complicated in structure, but also because many students seem, not only uncertain about the choice of their future endeavors, but also insecure within the academic system. For the latter reason, I also find the length of the college education advantageous. Since American students often begin their college education already at the age of 18, many of them are not yet ready for decisive conclusions about their career or their major

---

[124] In 1944 President Roosevelt signed the *GI Bill of Rights* (a.k.a. the *Servicemen's Readjustment Act*), which provided returning war veterans with school training, college education and vocational training. In a period of seven years, 2 300 000 veterans received college education, 3 500 000 received school training, and 3 400 000 received professional training. See Gerald L. Gutek, *Education in the United States: A historical perspective*, New Jersey 1986. This significant increase of students who went to different kinds of schools fundamentally changed the American system of higher education. Groups of citizens previously estranged from education now became involved in the system.

[125] Burns B. Crookston, "A developmental view of academic advising as teaching", in *Journal of College Student Personne*l, 1972: 13, pp. 12 – 17, quote from p. 12.

course of study. The fact that liberal arts colleges offer *General Education*, means that students have the possibility to search into several areas of interest and importance, and that they have time to prolong their decisions about major studies. However, they also, and this is a very important point, have the ability to form a specialized education from the start. Given this dynamic scope of the curriculum, advising is an important tool for helping students to identify their own abilities, needs and ambitions. In the ideal case, the advisor becomes someone who shapes the education in accordance with the needs of the student, rather than someone who simply informs the student about demands and formal requirements.

Another issue of interest is how college teachers handle the unavoidable conflicts of interest between ambitious and weak students in class. My own experience from Sweden is that when the teacher adjusts the level of education to the weaker students, this causes frustration among the ambitious and talented. The same phenomenon is evident in the classes I visited at St. Olaf College, where students with markedly different backgrounds, ambitions and abilities get together. I have also made the observation that the level of difficulty adapted in classroom teaching, is in general far below what the most talented and ambitious students demand. My conclusion is, again, that individual instruction largely compensates for this lack of advanced orientation, and that it actually functions as an ideal device for the adaptation of individually adjusted levels of education. However, this individualized form of education, clearly demands from the teacher an ability to identify specific needs of individual students, as well as the competence to teach and instruct on both a basic and an advanced level. Again, the key to an excellent liberal arts education seems to lie in the combination of broad and specialized perspectives on behalf of the teacher.

Related to this issue is the question how teachers deal with silent students, and how they encourage participants in seminars to join discussions. I raise the issue because it is one often discussed in

Sweden. It is of course hard to generalize from the limited amount of observations I made, but I have nevertheless found it interesting that most of the teachers I discussed with in the U.S., do *not* confront silent students at all. This might seem surprising, since discussions play an essential role within the tradition of liberal arts education. One explanation, though, is once more that this system allows and encourages a vital communication between the teacher and every single student outside of class. The classroom is only one learning environment among several important forums for learning. Consequently, the seminar does not uphold the same status in the U.S. as in Sweden. I find this highly challenging, since my own experience of the ambition, within the Swedish system, to make everyone speak in the seminar, is that it more and more tends to stand out as an end in itself, and that it can truly be questioned whether this approach actually increases the amount of knowledge produced. One hypothesis that has grown stronger during my stay in the U.S. is that the Swedish ambition to engage students in discussions has in fact become an expression of an attempt to frame the student within the terms set by the seminar and the teacher, rather than an attempt to engage the student in the production of knowledge. My conclusion is, that the both the length of seminars and the functions of them, especially with regard to students´ active participation, ought to be discussed more, and that the function of the seminar should be analyzed with regard to how it may be combined with other tutorial methods and alternative and complementary learning environments.

4.4 Learning outcomes

One important feature within the curriculum of St. Olaf College is that it provides relatively detailed descriptions of the purposes with and the intended learning outcomes of the education. I write "intended" learning outcomes, since within the curriculum, the de-

scriptions of courses and programs are often characterized by what the courses want to accomplish. One example can be picked from the program *Africa and the Americas*:

> The Africa and the Americas program offers a concentration that integrates studies of African history and culture, the forced movement of African peoples to the New World and the consequences of slavery and post-slavery relations in the United States. Throughout history, African and African American peoples have played a central role on the world's stage, and they continue to offer perspectives critical to understanding the modern world. The concentration in Africa and the Americas provides students with the opportunity to study the ways in which Africans and peoples of African descent understand and interpret their interactions with other cultures and traditions. The Africa/African Diaspora experience has been most commonly expressed and understood through its history, arts, religion and politics. As students explore the values and lifestyles deriving from communities of African heritage, they gain a fuller understanding of the significance of these communities' contributions to the larger world.[126]

My understanding is that American course descriptions generally are more outspoken about both the content and the actual outcomes of the education than Swedish descriptions. The above description, for instance, actually states that students will attain a fuller understanding of the conditions that the program discusses, just as it provides a simplified interpretation of the field it covers. Another example is from *Biomedical Studies*:

> The Biomedical Studies Concentration is intended as a plan of study that will enhance students' preparation for careers including traditional areas of health care such as dentistry, human medicine, and veterinary medicine but also therapies (physical, occupational, speech, music, dance), and work in hospital administration, hospital ministry, and biomedical ethics. Students can develop their own biomedical studies concentrations by designing and implementing a

[126] St. Olaf College, *The Academic Catalog for 2004 – 06*, p. 63.

> plan of study suited to their career goals. The concentration can be earned in conjunction with any major. They are required to complete a contract with the coordinator of the Biomedical Studies Concentration by the end of their sophomore year. The contract will be valid once initial exploration of three potential careers is completed.[127]

This is a good example of how course descriptions often focus on specifically the intended outcomes of the education. Characteristic is that the description also includes concrete references to the professional areas associated with the education, thereby framing the utilitarian ends of the courses offered. It is symptomatic that this description actually mentions "career goals", and thereby places the education in a context immediately relevant for the student.

These descriptions are clear examples of how American colleges have developed a more selling attitude when promoting their curricula than what is the case within the Swedish system, whose curricular descriptions, at least according to my experience, exposes a formality and a level of abstraction that clearly aims at preserving the integrity of the academic field, rather than attracting students. This extrovert attitude of American colleges is discernible all the way from colleges´ descriptions of their own profiles, to academic departments´ general presentation of courses, down to the specifications of courses sometimes provided by teachers in their syllabi and in student instructions. The latter aspect is not least important. Although most syllabi I have studied are more or less conventional descriptions of course content, dates and so forth, it is not unusual that syllabi also contain descriptions of intended learning outcomes. One example can be picked from a *First Year Writing course*: "This class will help you improve your writing in many ways: in clarity and beauty of expression, in depth and richness of thought, in versatility for different writing challenges, and in originality of style

[127] St. Olaf College homepage: www.stolaf.edu.

and approach." Another example is from an English course in *Journalistic Writing*:

> Journalistic writing is a class for those who want to learn to write for newspapers and public affairs magazines. You'll practice covering planned events (speeches, meetings, arts happenings) as well as hard news events (things that disrupt the routine or surprise, mostly unpredicted), and writing features and opinion pieces. To be a good journalist, you need to develop a critical ear for truth and accuracy (and learn the distinction), fairness, balance, and objectivity, so we will also critique the news.

More than directed towards the expected outcomes of the course, this description puts the course in the framework of utilitarian ends, and thus tries to connect to students´ expectations. It also gives an important account of the skills practiced during the course.

Learning outcomes is an important part within the *Bologna Process*, and in light of my experiences of American college culture, I definitely think that models for how these outcomes should be elaborated ought to be discussed more within the Swedish system. At the same time, it is important not to underestimate the cultural differences between the American and the Swedish system. American colleges are parts of what must be understood as a market of education, where colleges compete with each other. This is especially the case for private colleges like St. Olaf. My impression is that American descriptions of learning outcomes sometimes make promises that are not suitable within the Swedish system. However, it is my conviction that Swedish educators should reflect more actively on the purposes and the potential outcomes of courses. In other words, there are good reasons that education and knowledge are put in a context where its significance for students´ lives becomes more obvious. In my view, this is essential, not only for the promotion of specific courses, but also for the support of the academic fields related to the courses. If these academic fields, especially within the humanities, want to maintain their relevance,

they have reason to make their own ends and purposes in relation to the world clear to prospective students as well as to the public at large. Since I work within the humanities, my experience is that many teachers, me included, are reluctant towards expressing utilitarian ends of education as well as of research. Nevertheless, I think there are good reasons to sustain any discourse on why we study, why we do research and why we teach, and to put these different aspects of learning in connection with each other. In the end, the integrity of the academic field is largely dependent on the identity it conveys to students and to the general public.

4.5 Tenure

My last issue concerns the American tenure system, which differs significantly from the Swedish, chiefly because American college teachers get tenured after six years. There are three different kinds of teacher employment at American colleges: non-tenure, tenure-track, and tenure. Non-tenured teachers are employed by a contract, stating that they will not be tenured. Teachers on tenure-track are employed on the premise that they will be evaluated for tenure. Tenured teachers are permanently employed. The tenure-track system is foreign to Swedish conditions, to say the least, and since the labor legislation in Sweden differs enormously from the American context, there is no reason to give a full account of the implications of this system. However, a few remarks are worth making.

One interesting aspect, for instance, is that American educators on a wide front seem to defend the tenure system, mostly with reference to how the system supports academic freedom. It is a system which clearly sustains high quality standards at American colleges, and also guarantees the status of the college as an educational institution. At the same time, on an individual level, it is evident that the American tenure system creates a lot of anxiety

among teachers holding a tenure-track position. Teachers in this position are continuously being evaluated and reviewed, and during several years, they are hold in suspense as to whether they will be employed or not. Evaluations are being made both by tenured faculty members and by students, and tenured faculty occasionally hold meetings where teachers in tenure-track positions are being thoroughly scrutinized. On the other hand, it is equally evident that tenured college teachers, are held in great confidence by the college, and that they, as previously mentioned, enjoy more freedom in shaping their education than, for instance university teachers in Sweden. One example can be picked from the area of course evaluations. Teachers who hold a tenure-track position must use standardized course evaluations, which are later used as reference material in their application for tenure. However, after teachers have been appointed, they are free to construct their own course evaluations in ways that suit their own courses and their own pedagogy. Furthermore, they do not have to account for the outcome of the evaluations. I find this model positive, since in Sweden, course evaluations are often made out of duty rather than for practical reasons. This is just one example of how academic freedom, on an individual level, and with regard to educational activities, upholds a very high status at American colleges.

Although the American system differs significantly from Swedish circumstances, I find it challenging to reflect upon what significance the principles inherent in this system have within institutions where education and teaching play such an important role. In my view, it is clear that teachers on a tenure-track position are evaluated with regard to their teaching abilities (not their research abilities), but also that the tenure system hereby sustains the development of academic teachers in their actual work as teachers. The heavy demands put upon teachers in this position actually create a concentrated focus on teaching abilities and on education, and they thereby sustain a situation where teachers are trained into skillful educators. In Sweden, undergraduate teachers are often thrown

into teaching directly after, or even during their doctorate studies, and supported only by courses like, for instance, the two week "Teacher Training Course" offered by Uppsala University, and by occasional classroom observations. Although there is an evident value in separate teacher training courses, my belief is that undergraduate education would benefit largely from an approach where the teaching skills were, not only evaluated, but systematically developed during the actual work made by teachers. I am not sure if the American methods for evaluating teachers are appropriate for the Swedish system, but I do think that the very principle to observe and pay special attention to teaching skills during an extended period have the potential to increase the skills of university teachers. The best forums for the evaluation and development of teaching skills are no doubt the concrete learning environments were teachers are active, and I imagine a system were these forums could be used as training grounds for non-tenured faculty. However, measures of this kind within the Swedish context also requires that the status of undergraduate teaching becomes more manifest, and that pedagogical skills with regard to the specific demands of undergraduate education, are given more emphasis in the appointment of teachers. Although pedagogical skills are meant to be an important merit for proposed teachers in Sweden, the general impression is that academic research still upholds a larger significance. In my view, there is no reason, within the Swedish system, to diminish the importance of academic research as a qualification in the appointment of university teachers. However, I do find it important to provide university teachers with the possibility to develop and refine their teaching skills during the actual course of their work.

5.
Summary

The most important question throughout this study has been whether liberal arts education can provide a model for the development and improvement of undergraduate education in Sweden. My notion has been that improvements of this kind are necessary, not least because of the increasing gap between Swedish Upper Secondary School and the university, and because of the growing knowledge deficiencies among certain categories of Swedish students. My conclusion with regard to these assumptions is that models of *General Education* within the American tradition of liberal arts education definitely have the potential to compensate for some of the ignorance and cultural unawareness exposed by many first-year students in Sweden. However, not every form of *General Education* is suitable for the Swedish system. My impression is, for instance, that the traditional *core curriculum* model does not fit into Swedish circumstances. The reason is that it would probably be difficult to compel Swedish students to study certain prescribed courses. Swedish students are used to choices of study already in the Upper Secondary School, and my view is that a traditional *core* would discourage students from choosing higher education.

The two remaining models of *General Education*, however, are in my view highly suitable for the Swedish system. It must be said, though, that in order for the model of *Free Electives* to fulfill the purpose of a *General Education*, such electives must 1) be elaborated with the intended purpose of functioning as *General Education*, and 2) be attractive enough for students to choose them. In order to use *Free Electives* as a model for *General Education*, the

university would also have to find ways for informing new students of the existence, function, content and importance of these courses. Uppsala University today provides one free elective course called "Core curriculum", but since this course requires that students have already taken 40 credit points, it is clear that it rather has the status of a supplementary course than a course in *General Education*. Although I definitely hold the ambition of this course in high esteem, I also find it symptomatic of the Swedish system of education, that cross-disciplinary studies regarding scientific thinking and the search for knowledge, are concentrated into specialized courses. In my understanding, the questions addressed within this course are relevant for all students at an institution of higher education.

As for the other variety of *General Education* at Uppsala University, the one-year "College" education, it is clear that this program is adjusted to students who either lack the formal requirements for university education, or feel insecure at the prospect of university studies. My understanding is that this kind of education clearly fulfills an important purpose within the Swedish system of education. At the same time, it is evident that it does not provide any solutions to the widely spread knowledge deficiencies within the university. It is my impression that these problems concern a much larger number of students than those who actually choose to attend the "College" program.

The model I find most interesting with regard to the possibilities of applying *General Education* within the Swedish system, is without doubt the *diversified core*, which contains requirements connected, not to prescribed courses, but to *areas of knowledge*, i.e. requirements that can be fulfilled through several different courses across the curriculum. From my experience as a university teacher, it is evident that requirements in communication skills as well as requirements in the history of ideas and aesthetics would fill an important purpose within undergraduate education at, for instance, Uppsala University. Considering the university as a whole, and not only the Faculty of Arts, I find it especially important to stress the

significance of communication skills, and to emphasize how the model of a *diversified core* actually supports educational enterprises that put various areas of knowledge in connection with each other. To make use of a *diversified core* which emphasized the field of communication would, in my view, have the double benefit of satisfying a wide spread desire for training in communication, on the one hand, and arouse students' interest for language as a basis for the production of knowledge, on the other. Distribution requirements, moreover, is a model which has the potential to combine educational breadth with the need for specialization at every department of the university.

In my view, the use of a *diversified core* would also support the shift from an *Instruction Paradigm* to a *Learning Paradigm*, something stressed within the *Bologna Process*. Methods like *Writing Across the Curriculum* and programs like *The Great Conversation*, clearly encourage *integrative learning*, and it is my conviction that similar models within the Swedish system would have the potential both to compensate for the lack of basic knowledge among certain categories of students, and facilitate for students to make mature choices of majors or vocational orientations. The use of these models would also challenge university teachers to relate education and knowledge to developments within the society and the world, just as it would encourage and support inter- and multidisciplinary work. It is my conviction that an enterprise of this kind would vitalize, not only the field of the humanities, but virtually every faculty of the university, both with regard to education and to research.

As for the question of the relationship between research and teaching, I do not think that the American system provides any clear model for how concerns within the Swedish system can be addressed. It is obvious, though, that the lower teaching load at American colleges provides a situation where teachers can concentrate on the development of both their pedagogical and their theoretical skills. My impression is that teaching at American colleges,

just as in Sweden, has a lower status than research within the Academic system. At the same time, though, I sense that American teachers do not expose the same degree of discontent with regard to the absence of research assignments, as teachers in Sweden do. American college teachers act in an environment where *learning* is constantly at the centre of attention. The fact that this environment allows teachers great freedom to determine the shape and content of their courses, and the fact that teachers are constantly encouraged to develop new courses in line with their own interests, not only contribute to highly agreeable working conditions, but also to the development of excellent skills in teaching.

Another issue that I raised in my introduction was the fact that the body of students in Sweden has become more diversified and heterogeneous than before. Swedish universities today have to find ways to accommodate students with vastly different backgrounds, needs and aspirations. My understanding is that, because of this development, the future education of the university has to become more individualized, i.e. adjusted to the specific ambitions and needs of every student. American colleges no doubt provide a model for the successful individualization of education. The relatively low significance of extensive seminars, together with the importance attached to individual instruction, mirrors an approach to education that puts the individual student at the centre of attention. I find this structure highly relevant for the Swedish system. Not least, since it is a model that supports the move towards *integrative learning*.

As for this move, which also mirrors the shift from an *Instruction Paradigm* to a *Learning Paradigm*, my impression is that Swedish undergraduate education can learn a lot from the ambition of colleges like St. Olaf to establish dynamic learning environments. It is important to remember that such learning environments are not based simply on technology and logistics. A learning environment that supports integrative learning has, in my understanding, its foundation both in the diversity of the curriculum and in the im-

portance attached to teaching, and to the teachers' abilities to adjust education to the specific needs of the students.

As for the concerns regarding the funding of undergraduate education in Sweden, cultural and economic differences between Sweden and the U.S. render any productive comparisons superfluous. However, I find it important to emphasize how many of the problems within Swedish undergraduate education are connected to the fact that there is a tangible conflict between the economic interests of academic departments on the one hand, and the educational mission of university teachers, on the other. In its current shape, the Swedish system actually invites and supports a continuous lowering of the demands on students. This lowering of the demands is due to the increasing knowledge deficiencies among students, but it has no support in any reforms of the curriculum. The current system thus stimulates the development of low quality education, although it should be based on a curriculum with the ability to address various levels of previous knowledge among students, on the one hand, and the ability to maintain high quality standards, on the other. In my view, American liberal arts education, with its dual orientation towards basic and specialized studies, provides a model with the potential to fulfill such an ambition.

In this study, it has been difficult to measure the observations made of liberal arts education against several features within the *Bologna Process*. For instance, I have not been able to analyze systematically how the American model might provide ideas for the reform of the Master's Degree. In the U.S., this degree is a common choice among Bachelors, and it is often used as a means to change career direction (if not as a step towards Doctorate Studies). A Bachelor's Degree in *English* can lead to a Master's Degree in a different field, and so on. The reform of this Degree within the *Bologna Process* is partly in accordance with the American system, since it means the establishment of the Master as a two-year program of study. However, American Master Programs can be conducted in several different ways, i.e. they can be either entirely

based on courses, or completely research-based, or based on combinations of the two, and these circumstances make them completely different in structure compared with the model proposed in the *Bologna Process*. One important aspect, though, is the flexibility of the American system. American Master Degrees do not seem as dependent upon earlier specialization as the Swedish equivalent. This is largely because *General Education* in the U.S. provides a common ground that facilitates choices between *several* educational paths and, consequently, *several* professional careers.

One important aspect with regard to the *Bologna Process* is the question of grading. In the document *Bolognaprocessen vid Uppsala universitet – fas 2*, Uppsala University stresses the importance of further analysis with regard to any reforms of the grading system. My contribution to this analysis must remain brief, since I find it difficult to use any observations from within the U.S. as concrete guiding lines. My impression, though, is that modulated grading systems like the one widely applied in the U.S. clearly run the risk of leading to grade inflation. For this reason, I think that any reform within this direction should be supported by an analysis of how grade inflation can be prevented. I also think that discussions about reforming the grading system at Uppsala University should consider the overall status of grades in comparison with, for instance, standardized tests and certificates.

Another aspect stressed within the *Bologna Process* is the question of learning outcomes. My impression is that American colleges provide inspiring examples of how information on learning outcomes can be developed and increased. There are several reasons for educators within the Swedish context to reflect more on both the intended and concrete outcomes of the education provided. An enterprise like this would serve the function, not only to promote specific course, but also to put knowledge in a context comprehensible and relevant for the students. In my view, this is important within every academic field, and within vocational as well as non-vocational programs. It is vital that learning outcomes should not

be thought of only in terms of concrete skills and career opportunities, but also in terms of the ethical dimension of knowledge within the humanities.

*

In this study, I have put particular emphasis on the usefulness of *General Education* as a device for meeting the knowledge deficiencies among students within Swedish higher education. In my view, it is important to recognize how this ambition must not be regarded simply as an instrumental proceeding where the university should assume the role of the Upper Secondary School, and thereby adjusts its curriculum to prior levels of education. My understanding of liberal arts education, is that it fosters a culture of learning where the focus on learning abilities and on the common grounds of all knowledge, supports an actual refinement of both basic and advanced education. For a research university like Uppsala, it is essential to maintain its high quality standards as regards academic research. One of the important things we can learn from the American tradition of liberal arts education is, that such high quality standards presuppose a solid undergraduate education which, not only provides necessary tools for the production of specialized knowledge, but indeed fosters the intellectual, ethical as well as emotional powers of the knowledge producing individual.

* * *

References

Published books and articles

Bereiter, Carl, "Liberal Education in a Knowledge Society", in Smith, Barry (ed.) *Liberal Education in a Knowledge Society*, Chicago and La Salle, Illinois 2002, pp. 11 – 33

Bergman, Charles A., "Writing Across the Curriculum: An Annotated Bibliography", in *Writing Across the Curriculum: Current Issues in Higher Education*, American Association of Higher Education monograph, 1983 – 84:3, pp. 33 – 38

Berthoff, Ann, *The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models, and Maxims for Writing Teachers*, Montclair, NJ 1981

Björkman, Li Bennich, *Överlever den akademiska friheten? En intervjustudie av svenska forskares villkor i universitetens brytningstid*, Högskoleverket, 2004:1 R.

Botstein, Leon, "Some Thoughts on Curriculum and Change", in Farnham, Nicholas H. and Yarmolinsky, Adam (eds.), *Rethinking Liberal Education*, New York, Oxford 1996, pp. 51 – 61

Boyd, Willard L., "Institutional Autonomy and Curricula," in Furniss, Todd W. and Gardner, David P. (eds.), *Higher Education and Government: An Uneasy Alliance*, Washington 1979

Boyer, Ernest L., "The Student as Scholar", in Farnham, Nicholas H. and Yarmo-

-linsky, Adam (eds.), *Rethinking Liberal Education*, New York, Oxford 1996, pp. 145 – 155

Breneman, David W., "Are we losing our Liberal Arts Colleges?" *College Board Review*, 1990: 156, pp. 16 – 21

—— *Liberal Arts Colleges: Thriving, Surviving, or Endangered?* Washington D.C. 1994

Brink, Lars, "'Writing Across the Curriculum' i skola och i lärarutbildning? Exemplet Kreativt skrivande 20 poäng", i Schüllerqvist, Bengt och Nilsson, Roy (eds.), *Lärarutbildningens ämnesdidaktik. Artiklar om den egna undervisningen presenterade vid konferens 27 – 28 september 2000 vid Högskolan i Gävle*, pp. 21 – 46

Brookfield, Stephen D., *The Skillful Teacher: On Technique, Trust, and Responsiveness in the Classroom*, San Francisco, Oxford 1991

Centra, John A., "Research Productivity and Teacher Effectiveness", in *Research in Higher Education*, 1983: 18, pp. 379 – 389

Cooke, Virginia, *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Faculty Handbook*, Victoria 1991

Crimmel, Henry H., *The Liberal Arts College and the Ideal of Liberal Education: The Case for Radical Reform*, Lanham, New York, London 1993

—— "The Myth of the Teacher Scholar", in *Liberal Education* 1984: 3, pp. 183 – 98

Crookston, Burns B., "A developmental view of academic advising as teaching", in *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 1972:13, pp. 12 – 17

Ditmore, Denise R., "An Examination of the Issues Facing Career-Based Curricu-

lum Policies in Liberal Arts Colleges and Universities, in *New Foundation. Supporting the Reflective Educator* [Online Journal] 2001, www.newfoundation.com

Edmundson, Mark, "On the Uses of a Liberal Education: 1. As Lite Entertainment for Bored College Students", *Harper´s Magazine*, Sept. 1997, pp. 39 – 49

Edwards, A., *Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Programs: A Directory*, Acton, 1996

Feldman, Kenneth, "Research Productivity and Scholarly Accomplishment of College Teachers as Related to Their Instructional Effectiveness: A Review and Exploration", in *Research in Higher Education* 1987: 26.3, pp. 227 – 298

Fong, Bobby, "Liberal Education in the 21st Century", *Liberal Education*, vol. 90, 2004:1

Gaff, Jerry G., *General Education Today: A Critical Analysis of Controversies, Practices, and Reforms*, San Francisco 1983

Gaff Jerry G. and Wilson, R. C., *The Teaching Environment: A Study of Optimum Working Conditions for Effective College Teaching*, Berkeley 1971

Grites, Thomas J., *Academic advising: Getting us through the eighties*, American Association of Higher Education, Research Report No. 7, Washington D.C. 1979

Gutek, Gerald L., *Education in the United States: A historical perspective*, New Jersey 1986

Halldin, Sven et al., "Svenska språket dör ut på landets universitet", *DN* Debatt 2005-06-17

Harvard College Curricular Review, "Report of the Committee of General Education" 2005

Herman, Roger E., "The Case for Liberal Arts", in *The Futurist: Forecasts, Trends, and Ideas about the Future*, July – August 2000, pp. 16 – 17

Herman, Roger E. and Gioia, Joyce L., *How to Become an Employer of Choice*, Winchester 2000

Hirsch Jr., E. D., *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, Boston 1987

Huber, Mary Taylor, and Hutchings, Pat, *Integrative Learning: Mapping the Terrain*, Association of American Colleges and Universities, Washington D.C. 2004

Högskoleverkets rapportserie 2001:20 R, *Core curriculum – an educational journey: Description and evaluation of a liberal studies concept for university students*

Kennedy, George A., "Classics and Canon", in Gless, Darryl J., and Herrnstein Smith, Barbara (eds.), *The Politics of Liberal Education*, Durham and London 1992, pp. 223 – 231

Kimball, Bruce A., "A Historical Perspective", in Farnham, Nicholas H. and Yarmolinsky, Adam (eds.), *Rethinking Liberal Education*, New York, Oxford 1996, pp. 11 – 35

—— *Orators & Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education*, New York and London 1986

Lang, Eugene M., "Distinctively American: The Liberal Arts College", in *Daedalus. Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, vol. 128, 1999:1, pp. 133 – 150

Lanham, Richard A., "The Extraordinary Convergence: Democracy, Technology,

Theory, and the University Curriculum", in Gless, Darryl J. and Herrnstein Smith, Barbara (eds.), *The Politics of Liberal Education*, Durham, London 1992. pp. 33 – 56

Lee, Gordon C., "The Morrill Act and Education", in *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 12, 1963:1, pp. 19 – 40

Levine, Arthur, *Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum*, San Francisco, Washington, London 1978

Liedman, Sven-Eric, "In Search of Isis: General Education in Germany and Sweden", in Rothblatt, Sheldon and Wittrock, Björn (eds.), *The European and American University since 1800: Historical and Sociological Essays*, Cambridge 1993, pp. 74 – 108

Lucas, Christopher J., *American Higher Education: A History*, New York 1994

Lyman, Peter, "Technology and Computer Literacy", in Farnham, Nicholas H. and Yarmolinsky, Adam (eds.), *Rethinking Liberal Education*, New York, Oxford 1996, pp. 109 – 123

Marrou Henri I., "Les arts libéraux dans l´antiquité classique", in *Artes libéraux au moyen age: Actes du quatrième*, Congrès International de Philosophie Médiévale, Paris 1969, pp. 5 – 27

McNamara, Kristy and Cover, Daniel J., "An Assessment of Extramural Activities that Encourage Support for the Liberal Arts", in *College Student Journal*, vol. 33, 1999:4, pp. 594 – 607

Nussbaum, Martha C., *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, Cambridge (Mass.), London 1997

Oakley, Francis, "Against Nostalgia: Reflections on Our Present Discontents in American Higher Education", in Gless, Darryl J. and Herrnstein Smith,

Barbara (eds.), *The Politics of Liberal Education*, Durham and London 1992, pp. 267 – 289

Peritz, Janice H., "When Learning is Not Enough: Writing Across the Curriculum and the (RE)turn to Rhetoric", in *Internet JAC 14.2*, Fall 1994

Persson, Anders, *Nyfikenhet, kritiskt tänkande och kvalitet. Reflektioner över utvärdering, pedagogisk utveckling och kvalitetsarbete inom universitetsutbildningen*, Utvärderingsenheten, Lunds universitet, Rapport nr 96:196

Peterson, Russell W., "Why not a Separate College of Integrated Studies?" in Clark, Mary E. and Wawrytko, Sandra A. (eds.), *Rethinking the Curriculum: Towards an Integrated, Interdisciplinary College Education*, Contributions to the Study of Education, Number 40, New York, Westport, Connecticut, London 1990, pp. 215 – 226

Potts, David B., "American Colleges in the Nineteenth Century: From Localism to Denominationalism", in *The History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 11, 1971, 4, pp. 363 – 380

Prince Jr., Gregory S., "Are We Graduating Good Citizens?" in *Educational Record*, Summer/ Fall 1997, pp. 34 – 42

Ratcliff, James L., "Quality and Coherence in General Education", in Gaff, Jerry et al., *Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum: A Comprehensive Guide to Purposes, Structures, Practices, and Change*, San Francisco 1997, pp. 141 – 169

Rothblatt, Sheldon, *Tradition and Change in English Liberal Education: An essay in History and Culture*, London 1976

Rudolph, Frederick, *Curriculum. A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636*, San Francisco, Washington, London 1981

Russell, David R., *Writing in the Academic Disciplines 1870 – 1990: A Curricular History*, Carbondale 1991

Schneider, Carol Geary, "Changing Practices in Liberal Education: What future Faculty Need to Know", in *Peer Review*, Spring 2004, pp. 4 – 7

—— *Practicing Liberal Education: Formative Themes in the Reinvention of Liberal Learning*, Washington D.C., 2003

Schuman, Samuel, *Old Main: Small Colleges in Twenty-First Century America*, Baltimore and London 2005

Stevens, Anne H., "Philosophy of General Education", in *The Journal of General Education*, vol. 50, 2001:3, pp. 165 – 191

St. Olaf College, *The Academic Catalog for 2004 – 06*

Thomas, Russell, *The Search for a Common Learning: General Education, 1800 – 1960*, New York 1962

Webster, David S., "Does Research Productivity Enhance Teaching?" in *Educational Record* 1985: 66.4, pp. 60 – 62

Witt-Brattström, Ebba, "Humanioran är satt på svältkost", *DN* Debatt, 2005-11-11

Wolniak, Gregory C., Seifert, Tricia A., Blaich, Charles F., "A Liberal Arts Education Changes Lives: Why Everyone Can and Should Have This Experience", in *Liberal Arts Online*, Vol. 4, 2004:3

Wong, Frank F., "The Search for American Liberal Education", in Farnham, Nicholas H., Yarmolinsky, Adam (eds.), *Rethinking Liberal Education*, New York, Oxford 1996, pp. 63 – 76

Internet Resources

AACU Association of American Colleges and Universities: www.aacu-edu.org

Brown College: www.browncollege.com

Carleton College: www.carleton.edu

College Board. AP Central: www.apcentral.collegeboard.com

College of the Humanities and Science (Harrison Middleton University): www.chumsci.edu

Government Offices of Sweden (Regeringskansliet): www.sweden.gov.se

Gustavus Adolphus College: www.gustavus.edu

Gutenberg College: www.gutenberg.edu

NACE National Association of Colleges and Employers: www.naceweb.org

NCES National Center for Education Statistics: www.nces.ed.gov

New Foundations: Supporting the Reflective Educator: www.newfoundations.com

St. Olaf College: www.stolaf.edu

Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (Högskoleverket): www.hsv.se

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching:
www.carnegiefoundation.org

University of Minnesota: www.umn.edu

University of Minnesota, Morris: www.morris.umn.edu

Uppsala University: www.uu.se

WAC Clearing House: http://wac.colostate.edu

Tidigare rapporter från Avdelningen för utveckling av pedagogik och interaktivt lärande.

Nr 1 *Undervisa tillgängligt! Pedagogiska verktyg för likabehandling av studenter med funktionshinder*. Ann-Sofie Henriksson, 2003.

Nr 2 *Att bedöma pedagogisk skicklighet – går det? En diskussion av bedömningskriterier med utgångspunkt från svensk och internationell forskning och praxis*. Birgitta Giertz, 2003.

Nr 3 *Från ideal till praxis! Hur behandlas policyprogrammet på institutionsnivå?* Anna Hedin, 2004.

Nr 4 *Train with Care!On Developing a Supervisor Training Programme and Strategies for Managing Supervisory Issues*. Peter Reinholdsson, 2004.

Nr 5 *Examinationen som vägvisare. Högskolestudenters upplevelse av examination i ett longitudinellt perspektiv*. Towe Wiiand, 2005.

Rapporter från tidigare Enheten för utveckling och utvärdering.

Nr 1 *Utbildning med effekt. En utvärdering av pedagogisk grundkurs under åren 1988-92*. Birgitta Giertz och Cajsa Ekstav, 1996.

Nr 2 *Pedagogisk utbildning för utländska lärare. En studie av utländska lärares behov av kompetensutveckling och stöd för lärararbetet*. Annika Lundmark, 1996.

Nr 3 *Problembaserad inlärning inom hushållsvetarprogrammet. En utvärdering av kursen Kostplanering och måltidsplanering i storhushåll*. Britta Tenow, 1996.

Nr 4 *Utvärdering av grundutbildningsverksamheten. Grundutbildning, arbetsmiljö och organisation vid kulturantropologiska institutionen*. Peter Bretschneider och Inga-Lill Aronsson, 1996.

Nr 5 *Mentor 95. Rapport från försöksverksamhet med pedagogiskt handledarskap*. Birgitta Giertz, 1997.

Nr 6 *Vad styr studenternas val av fördjupning? En studie av teknologernas grenval på teknisk fysik programmet*. Cajsa Ekstav, Annika Lundmark och Rolf Paulsson, 1997.

Nr 7 *En strimma PBI. Problembaserad inlärning inom läkarutbildningens internmedicinska år vid Uppsala universitet – en utvärdering*. Laine Strömberg och Gunnar Birgegård, 1997.

Nr 8 *Studentens Start. En rapport om att introducera studenter till Uppsala universitet och universitetsstudier*. Red. Karin Apelgren, 1997.

Nr 9 *Livsstil och vetenskap. En studie i studerandeperspektiv av disciplinen Musikvetenskap vid Uppsala universitet*. Roland Forsberg, 1997.

Nr 10 *Problembaserat lärande i en distanskurs (PBDiL). Lärarsynpunkter på en kurs i energikunskap och en extern utvärdering*. Kjell Aleklett, Göran Adelsköld, Jan Blomgren, Howard Barrows och Rune Axelsson, 1998.

Nr 11 *Pedagogisk och vetenskaplig skicklighet i lika mån? En kartläggning av pedagogiska meriter vid tillsättning av lektorat*. Ingegerd Gunvik Grönbladh och Birgitta Giertz, 1998.

Nr 12 *Konsten att kommunicera. Muntlig och skriftlig framställning – en konst för studenten*. Red. Karin Apelgren och Ann Blückert, 1998.

Nr 13 *Lika men ändå olika – vilka skillnader finns mellan kvinnliga och manliga studenters uppfattning om studierna?* Annika Lundmark, Helena Edvardsson och Laine Strömberg, 1998.

Nr 14 *Examination i fokus. Högskolestudenters lärande och examination – en litteraturöversikt*. Towe Wiiand, 1998.

Nr 15 *Universitetet som kulturell mötesplats. Verklighet – utmaning – möjlighet!* Red. Karin Apelgren och Ann Blückert, 1998.

Nr 16 *Framtidens universitet. Om visioner, former, teknik, och pedagogik*. Red. Karin Apelgren och Ann Blückert, 1999.

Nr 17 *Röster om svensk universitetsutbildning – att vara utbytesstudent i Uppsala*. Helena Edvardsson, 1999.

Nr 18 *Samtal och tal i universitetsmiljön*. Red. Ann Blückert och Susanne Vikström, 1999.

Nr 19 *Mest lika – delvis olika. Hur upplever kvinnliga och manliga studenter sin studiesituation?* Annika Lundmark, Laine Strömberg och Towe Wiiand, 1999.

Nr 20 *Och plötsligt var jag studierektor. En belysning av studierektorsrollen och dess utvecklingsmöjligheter*. Maja Elmgren, Anna Hedin och Kerstin Thelander, 2000.

Nr 21 *Uppfattningar av kvalitet. En genomgång av litteratur om kvalitet och kvalitetsarbete*. Birgitta Giertz, 2000.

Nr 22 *Livet efter examen. Hur förbereder vi studenterna för arbetslivet?* Red. Ann Blückert och Susanne Vikström, 2000.

Nr 23 *Att undersöka det pedagogiska frirummet. Några ämnesdidaktiska projekt vid Uppsala universitet*. Red. Bengt Ekman, 2000.

Nr 24 *Från policy till praktik. Om implementeringen av jämställdhet och det lokala jämställdhetsarbetets villkor*. Fredrik Bondestam, 2000.

Nr 25 *Måste vi bry oss om studenten?* Red. Ann Blückert och Susannne Vikström, 2000.

Nr 26 *Uppfattningar om Uppsala universitet. En intervjustudie med ett urval företrädare för näringslivet*. Sverker Syrén, 2001.

Nr 27 *Pedagogisk meritportfölj – och plötsligt var jag meriterad!* Karin Apelgren och Birgitta Giertz, 2001.

Nr 28 *I jämställdhetens tecken. Semiologiska fragment.* Fredrik Bondestam, 2001.

Nr 29 *Skrivarstugor och loggböcker. En översikt över idéer och insatser kring studenters skrivande.* Ann Blückert, 2002.

This study is the result of a five-month stay at the English Department of St. Olaf College in Minnesota, USA. The main purpose is to discuss how American liberal arts education can inspire the development and improvement of undergraduate education in Sweden. The study describes the historical background of liberal arts education, as well as its contemporary theory and practice. Special attention is given to various models of core curricula and general education requirements as means for the preparation of well-informed students. The study also highlights vital principles of pedagogy applied within the American tradition, as the use of integrative learning, methods like Writing Across the Curriculum, and the shift from an Instruction Paradigm to a Learning Paradigm. How do liberal arts colleges work to attain the unique combination of knowledge breadth and qualitative specialization that have earned them their high reputation? And what can educators in Sweden learn from this tradition of an individually oriented education for life?

Patrik Mehrens is a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature, and appointed as Senior Lecturer at the Department of Literature, Uppsala University.

Rapporten kan beställas från
Avdelningen för utveckling av pedagogik och interaktivt lärande (UPI)
Uppsala universitet, Box 513, 751 20 Uppsala
Telefax 018-471 76 80

Avdelningen för
utveckling av pedagogik
och interaktivt lärande

www.upi.uu.se