USC RESEARCH BANK

University of the Sunshine Coast
Queensland, Australia

Social and historical factors in the development of Swedish adult education

Link to publication record in USC Research Bank:
http://research.usc.edu.au/vital/access/manager/Repository/usc:20420

Document Version:
Author accepted manuscript (postprint)

Citation for published version:
Christie, Michael (2007) Social and historical factors in the development of Swedish adult education. *Pedagogical Papers Series,* Vol. Summer

Copyright Statement:
Copyright © 2007 Michael Christie. Reproduced with permission.

General Rights:
Copyright for the publications made accessible via the USC Research Bank is retained by the author(s) and / or the copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
The University of the Sunshine Coast has made every reasonable effort to ensure that USC Research Bank content complies with copyright legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact research-repository@usc.edu.au providing details, and we will remove the work immediately and investigate your claim.

OPEN ACCESS

Social and historical factors in the development of Swedish adult education

Michael F Christie
Chalmers University of Technology
Göteborg, Sweden

Sweden has one of the best-developed and most generously resourced systems of adult education in the world. Part of the richness is a strong tradition built up over the last four centuries. This tradition has endowed Sweden with a very positive view towards lifelong education as well as an enviable infrastructure in terms of schools and associations devoted to adult education. There are several social and historical factors that have given the adult education movement its impetus in Sweden. This paper traces those factors and makes occasional reference to comparable forces in Australia's history of adult education.

Introduction

The antecedents of non-formal adult education go back a long way in Sweden. In this paper I look at some of the social and historical factors that have laid the foundations for one of the world's best adult education systems. In the seventeenth century Sweden became a major European power, winning control of Danzig and other Prussian ports during its war with Poland. At the Peace of Wesphalia, which concluded the thirty-year war in 1648 Sweden gained more provinces along the Baltic coast. By the middle of the seventeenth century Sweden had virtual control of the Baltic trade. Part of its colonial policy was to spread Swedish language and culture throughout the territory it controlled. In order to do this it built universities at Tartu in Estonia (1632), at Åbo in Finland (1640), and at Lund (1668) in territory that had previously belonged to the Danish crown. The idea was to train local people to become Lutheran priests or government officials.

In this period the Swedish Church controlled what little primary and secondary education there was although it is interesting to note that on the island of Visingsö, in southern Sweden, Count Brahe established Sweden's first non religious school (Runeby in Westin 1980: 7-8). It still exists today and is run as a folk high school by an adult education association. Per Brahe, Count of Visingsö and twice governor general of Finland, founded the school in 1636, much to the annoyance of the Bishops of Växjö and Jonköpping. Per Brahe's school prepared young people from the island and surrounding countryside for the small number of gymnasia run by the church. Another remarkable feature of the school was that it allowed some girls to study there. One of its best students was the daughter of the school's longest serving headmaster (Ribberfalk 1995).

Per Brahe's school was the exception that proved the rule. The church guarded its right to run preparatory schools and gymnasia jealously. These schools were meant for the well to do or for young men earmarked for an ecclesiastical career. The teachers at such schools were chosen from among the better-educated clergy but the ordinary parish priest was also given an educational role. Each year he was required to gather the people from a town, factory or farming community in

his parish and test their ability to read from the scriptures. Most parishioners got their grounding in reading and writing from Sunday school but many parents took the trouble to reinforce these lessons with help at home. There was both a carrot and a stick to support this literacy program. Only those who could demonstrate an ability to read and recite the scriptures could apply to be married. The records of these annual surveys are still available on microfilm and show a surprising degree of literacy among townsfolk and the landed peasantry.

The Royal Academies

In the eighteenth century, individuals and organisations as well as the church and state began to promote education for adult learners. Those involved were mainly wealthy and well-educated people. They were often conservative in their political thinking but believed that the dissemination of useful knowledge would help Sweden both economically and politically. The Royal Academy of Science (Vetenskap's Akademien), which was founded in 1739 by people like Carl von Linné, produced small tracts designed to popularise recent scientific discoveries. Another institution, the Royal Academy of Letters (Vitterhet's Akademien), established by Queen Lovisa Ulrika in 1753, did something similar in the area of the humanities. The role of the latter academy was restricted to historical and antiquarian interests after Ulrika's son, Gustav lll, founded the Swedish Academy (Svensk Akadamien) in 1786. All three academies, although patrician in membership, aimed at making new knowledge accessible to a broader public, an activity not dissimilar from that proposed by supporters of adult education movement in the following century (Britannica, 1994: 327).

The Academy of Science had the right to publish an almanac which contained a calendar for planting as well as a regular article aimed at the farmer. It provided information on important changes in society such as the replacement of the Julian calendar in 1753 and monetary reform in 1778. Linné himself wrote a piece on brewing beer. The extent of this 'popular education' was impressive. In 1750 the Academy published 150 000 copies of its almanac and nearly 300 000 in 1813. Given that the population of Sweden was just under two and a half million at the start of the nineteenth century most literate adults must have had access to it. Lars Salvius, the publisher, brought out his own weekly journal *Lärda Tidningar* (The Learned Magazine) in 1745 and continued to do so until his death in 1773. He printed other tracts by academicians and began a lending library, the first of its type in the country. The publication of the academy's almanac and activities associated with it could be described as Sweden's first secular adult education initiative (Wallerius, 1988: 8-41).

The authorities realised almanacs and magazines could be used for government purposes, particularly for advertising important administrative and financial changes or giving instructions regarding the planting and production of crops that would best benefit the state. They produced registers, gazettes and directories all of which contributed to a body of reading material that was written in plain Swedish rather than Latin and accessible to the educated landholder. The state remained ambivalent, however, in its attitude to popular literature, particularly in the period leading up to and following the French Revolution. It was quick to ban subversive literature and closed down any publications that could forment

political unrest. Among those banned were small monthlies such as *Allmogen*, the journal of a society that promoted knowledge for the ordinary citizen.

Reform or Revolution

In the first half of the nineteenth century Europe was a political pressure cooker. In the German Confederation, which spanned most of Western Europe, rulers clung to various forms of absolute monarchy. Many chose to suppress attempts at political change and the pressure built inexorably until the revolutionary year of 1848. On the other hand some constitutional monarchs, for example in England and Sweden, recognised that their survival lay in gradual reform rather than repression. Gustav lll of Sweden, in an attempt to neutralise opposition from the nobles and the forces they could command, made vital concessions to the peasantry in 1789. These concessions included the right to purchase their crofts, buy noble land and hold public office. Tensions between king and nobility continued until Gustav lV Adolphus's disastrous war with Russia. In the Peace of 1809 Sweden lost Finland, the king was deposed and his uncle installed. A new constitution gave increased power to the Riksdag, Sweden’s representative body for the four estates - the nobles, clergy, merchants and farmers. The new constitution gave the Riksdag the right to tax, created an independent Judiciary and divided legislative power between the King and the Riksdag. An office resembling that of the modern day ombudsman was created to protect citizen rights (Åberg 1985: 61-65).

In the same year Gustaf Abraham Silverstolpe called for basic education for all classes of society, arguing that it would help inculcate morality, love of country and an acceptance of one's place in society. Education was seen as a means of averting revolution and instituting reform. Others, like the teacher Carl Broocmans and the botanist Carl Agardh (later the Bishop of Karlstad) rejected the notion that education was the exclusive privilege of the clergy and the upper classes and supported libraries and other forms of popular education. By 1833 this push for educational reform had another motif. Erik Gustaf Geiijer insisted that poverty was founded in ignorance and that education could be used not only to inform people of their duties and moral obligations but also to improve their social and economic situation. On 18 June 1842 the government bowed to demands for educational reform and introduced basic schooling for all and provided some support for parish libraries.

Pamphlets and popular magazines

While 1842 can be considered a crucial year for compulsory schooling in Sweden the key date for adult education is probably 1832. In that year Frans Anton Ewerlöf published a small text called *Om Folkbilding* (On Adult Education). It was a rather free translation of ideas first published in 1825 by Lord Bougham in a tract entitled *Practical Observations upon the Education of the People, addressed to the Working Classes and their Employers.* Brougham argued for mechanics institutes where workers could improve themselves through discussion, reading and appropriate lectures. He was a leading member of the British philanthropic movement that worked so effectively for the abolition of slavery, education for ordinary people and legislative reform. His pamphlet, which had already been translated into both French and German, inspired like-

minded reformers in Sweden. In 1833 Ewerlöf, together with such well known figures as Frans Mikael Franzén, Johan Olof Wallin and Jöns Jacob Berzelius, began a society dedicated to the 'dissemination of recent knowledge'.

In 1834 the society published a quarterly journal called *Läsning för Folket* (Reading for the People). It soon had a circulation of 10 000 copies, an impressive figure for any period. More importantly the journal was published without a break for ninety years. The society actively promoted parish libraries and many of these were revitalised, especially in places like Värmland, where the newly appointed Bishop, Carl Agardh, subsidised them. Another famous Swede active in the publication of reading matter for ordinary Swedes was Carl Jonas Almquist, the novelist. He contributed to a series produced in Uppsala between 1838-1840, called simply, *Folkskrifter* (Wallerius 1988:18-19).

Läsning för Folket was not the only magazine designed for the self-education of adults. Other publications were produced with names such as *Newspaper for the Farming Class, Newspaper for Citizens of all Classes* and *The Swedish Farmers Newspaper*. These papers promoted debate on social and political issues as well as providing reading material for the ordinary farmer. Unlike *Läsning för Folket* many of these papers were short-lived but they did contribute to a changing perception of society and gradual erosion of Sweden's rigid class society. The domination of the nobles, clergy, merchants and well to do farmers was still strong but both liberalism and radicalism attracted an increasing number of supporters. The liberals drew their support from expanding middle class - wealthy landowners, timber merchants and miners. They wanted fewer restrictions, greater access to foreign capital, a say in local government and a more representative Riksdag.

Sweden watched anxiously during the 'hungry forties' as crop failures and economic problems drove the lower classes in other parts of Europe to the point of open rebellion. When the Paris insurrection of February 1848 toppled King Louis-Phillipe revolutionaries throughout Western Europe were emboldened. Revolutions occurred in many parts of the German Confederation with some stunning successes but ideological differences among the radicals undermined their success and many victories were short-lived. In the 1850s a number of absolute monarchs reestablished control and maintained it by even greater oppression. Sweden watched anxiously. Reform was more appealing than revolution especially for those who perceived an irreversible shift in values.

In Sweden such change was already evident by the middle of the nineteenth century. In matters religious the established Church of Sweden was being challenged on two fronts. By Evangelical Lutherans on the one hand and new scientific ideas on the other. Isolated farmers demanded the right to communicate with God directly rather than always through the pastor and the village church service. At the same time anti clerical feeling was encouraged by Darwinism, which threw into doubt the biblical version of human genesis. Society itself was changing. New inventions in communication and transportation helped spread ideas more rapidly and altered both the pace and pattern of life. The static world of the rural village with its church and manor house was disintegrating. People no longer accepted the division of society into separate, hierarchical classes as God given. Socialist thinkers gave plausible explanations for the concentration of

power and money in the hands of so few and mobilised the landless and discontented.

Social and political factors

Sweden was in a particular bind. It had assumed the status of a major power in the seventeenth century but attempts to maintain that position during the Napoleonic wars had failed. While other countries, most notably England, industrialised Sweden remained an agricultural nation. At the start of the nineteenth century 90% of it population still worked on the land. Its borders were secure but its empire had evaporated and apart from its control of Norway it was once more a small and not particularly influential European state. Its army was experienced and well trained and this helped it maintain a neutral stance as Europe's small kingdoms fought against the forces of nationalism. In that sense Sweden could be grateful that King Gustav Vasa's military campaigns in the sixteenth century had created a strong national state. Although politically stable Sweden's agriculture required reform and its industry was too reliant on smallscale iron and timber works.

At the start of the nineteenth century Gustav lV Adolphus had enacted agricultural reforms in the southern part of Sweden and in 1827 new laws forbade the practice of dividing land among one's sons. As England had done in previous centuries farmers were forced to enclose their land, a practice that made agriculture more efficient but upset traditional rural society. The rural village gave way to small independent farms and although the acreage increased the yield was not as good and frontier farmers struggled to make a living. A surprising number of them (about 50% in 1825) owned their own land but many others were crofters who paid for the use of a house and a small amount of land by working the landlord's estate. The landless peasants, whose numbers doubled during these years, were the most badly affected because they no longer had access to a village common. By 1850 just on 40% of the population belonged to this class.

Population increase added another pressure. In Sweden the number of people went from 2.5 million in 1800 to 3.8 million in 1850 and by the end of the century had doubled to be 5.1 million. Esais Tegnér, the poet, gives the most succinct explanation. The increase, he said, was the result of 'peace, vaccination and potatoes'. Potatoes were a mixed blessing. Shortly after their introduction farmers began to use part of the potato crop to distil a highly alcoholic drink called 'aquavit', 'bränvinn' or simply 'sprit'. Rural people believed that the clear white liquid was literally the 'water of life' and used it on an extraordinary scale. Only those who owned land had the right to distil potatoes. Farmers began to pay part of their workers wages with sprit and many farms became a sort of tavern. In 1829 there were no less than 173 000 aquavit stills in the country and consumption was estimated at 46 litres per inhabitant a year compared with 9 litres today (Åberg, 1985: 81-2). Mothers would use sugar dipped in aquavit to put their children to sleep and in hard times bread soaked in alcohol was often the only food a family would eat.

Alcohol abuse and attempts to contain it became the focus of one of Sweden's earliest popular movements. Peter Wieselgren, a vicar of the established Church of Sweden, waged a vigorous campaign against intemperance and societies were

formed throughout the country to fight it. These societies exerted considerable pressure on the Riksdag and in 1853 the government limited the right to distil aquavit to a small number of companies. By then a large proportion of the population was addicted and the temperance societies, such as the International Order of Good Templars (IOGT) saw the need to educate the adult population as well as lobby those in government. In addition to organising marches and rallies the temperance societies built meetinghouses where they could discuss the issue and read books. Some of these remain and together with other ’folkhuset’ built by the free church and workers movements are exquisite examples of early popular architecture.

Religious dissatisfaction

Changes in rural society had another important effect on society that I have hinted at earlier. The break up of the old villages and a wider distribution of the rural population affected the way people worshipped. The established Swedish church had been the focus of village life but more and more farmers and their families found it difficult to attend church on Sundays because of the isolated nature of their farms. They still wished to worship however and evangelical Lutherans argued that if the people could not come to the Church the Church should go to the people. The established church disagreed and a 'Free Church' movement began which argued for the right of people to worship in their own homes or in places provided for itinerant preachers. The established Church used its considerable power to squash this movement but such opposition often strengthened rather than weakened the 'Free Churches'. The movement saw the importance of education in its struggle and like the temperance societies made use of study circles and public meetings to convince a broader public.

Such religious dissatisfaction has to been seen against a much broader backdrop of poverty and social dislocation. Drink was a symptom of the harshness of Swedish working class life. It was a means of escape. In his novel *The Emigrants*, Vilhelm Moberg, focuses on another, more dramatic escape. He gives a grim description of the life of the small farmer in the middle of the nineteenth century, particularly in the more populous region of Småland. Bad harvests, rocky land and the overbearing attitude of both church and state forced many to emigrate. Between 1840 and the end of the century 850 000 Swedes had sought a new life in North America. The themes of rural poverty, crop failure, religious persecution and alcohol abuse all figure in Moberg's account. Emigration eased population pressure but life for those who stayed on remained hard.

Industrialization

Although it was tough in the country it was even difficult for the poor to survive in cities and towns. Until the industrial revolution was established in Sweden about 10% of Swedes lived in urban areas. Sweden did begin to industrialise to any large extent until the 1840s. The introduction of the Limited Liability Companies' Act of 1848 made it easier for companies to obtain capital and it was capital that drove largescale change. The advent of banking, railways, steamships and imported industrial techniques helped transform the mining, timber and manufacturing industries. Wool and cotton cloth had always been produced in small workshops or at home to supplement food production but now mills, using

English techniques and machinery, were opened in port towns like Norrköpping. In mining, small, cooperative mines and smelters that had been operating since the middle ages were bought up by companies which used new methods (the Lancashire process for example) to produce larger quantities of higher grade pig iron for export.

The demand for timber increased both at home and abroad from the mid nineteenth century onwards and traditional timber production was overtaken by the introduction of steam driven mills located on river mouths, particularly in Norrland. Between 1850 and 1870 the export of timber jumped by 500% and Sweden, famous for its fine paper, searched for ways to use its timber resources in other ways - as toothpicks, matchsticks and, for example, by using wood pulp instead of fibre in the production of newsprint (Åberg 1985: 76). Workers in these new mining and timber ventures toiled twelve hours a day for low wages. One fourth of all industrial workers, who numbered 80 000 by 1870, were women and the percentage of workers employed in industry had risen from10 to 15%. Housing conditions in the inner city and at the mining and timber camps were deplorable. Workers had no voting or other rights and therefore little chance of effecting change. While the wealth created by local and overseas capitalists was invested in the fine buildings we see in Stockholm and Göterborg today the working class lived in slums. Drink and prostitution was commonplace and a small, dark dwelling was often home to seventeen people. The historical novels of Per Anders Fogelström give us a poignant insight into these conditions.

Social reformers like Johan Ellmin, Olof Renhult and Sven Trädgårdh had believed that education was an important way to improve this situation. In Stockholm, as early as 1845, they set up study circles for handicraft and factory workers. The spread of mechanics institutes in England and some of its colonies influenced their ideas. They proposed a place where interested workers could improve themselves through reading and discussion. It was to be a meetinghouse for ordinary people as opposed to the town hall where the rich and powerful now met. The study circle idea spread quickly and within a few years small numbers of workers in 32 towns and cities throughout Sweden met regularly on Sunday afternoon in order to discuss issues and make use of a small library of books. It is hard to determine the extent to which such reform groups influenced change in politics but they did win small victories such as legislation in 1852 to ban night work in factories and workshops for minors.

In 1865 the government made significant concessions to the growing demands for popular political representation. The Riksdag represented by the four estates was replaced by a bicameral parliament: In the election that followed only 20% of the male population had the right to vote and the farmers were disappointed that despite their efforts the first chamber remained the preserve of the upper classes. They did gain control of the second chamber however and this was a small but significant advance in democracy. The farmers pushed through municipal reforms that gave them more say in local politics. To use such power effectively they realised the importance of education, particularly for their sons and daughters who now had the possibility of public employment as well as work on the farm. The state universities did not appeal because they were located in the cities and offered academic, latin based subjects of study. Instead they opted for an

educational model that had been established in Denmark for some years - the folk high school.

Folk high schools

The Danish thinker Nikolai Grundtvig first proposed this type of school in the late 1830s. He had argued that Denmark, indeed all Scandinavia, needed a new type of school for adults, one that valued 'the living word' rather than 'the dead letter' and which was based on democratic rather than hierarchical principles. Grundtvig picked up a number of his ideas from three trips that he made to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1829-31. He was impressed by the Cambridge system of tutorials and after class contact between teachers and students. He also liked the idea of residential colleges and his own 'schools of life' were partly inspired by them. Grundtvig argued that by living together young adults would learn personal and vocational skills from each other as well as establish contacts that would benefit them later. He also advocated that students themselves should have a say in their curriculum.

The farmers founded three schools - Hvilan in Malmöhus county in 1868 and soon after Önnestad in the Kristianstads region and Herrestad in Östergötland. Other counties and communes followed suit. Västmanlands founded Tärna in 1776 and Västernorrlands county established Hola folk high school not long after. The farmers' sons attended long courses in the winter off-season, while their daughters took shorter courses in the summer. There was an emphasis on civics, mechanical skills, farm and home management and modern cultivation techniques. By the end of the century another 23 folk high schools were started and as early as 1906 the workers movement opened Brunnsvik in Ludvika where it trained its union leaders and offered courses to workers, particularly miners, from the Dalarna region. Working class leaders had not always agreed on the importance of adult education but by the turn of the century it was an article of faith.

Unions had been established in some trades as early as the middle of the nineteenth century (the shoemakers in Örebro for example) but it was not until the 1880s that they began to work together on a regional and national level. Those interested in the welfare of the workers tended to fall into two camps - the liberals and the more radical socialists. It was the former group that first argued the case for educating the working class. In 1880, Anton Nyström, a teacher, positivist and political radical, founded the Stockholm Workers' Institute. He hoped the institute would act as an alternative to the conservative farmers' folk high schools. It was to offer lectures, discussion groups and providing reading rooms where workers, in their precious spare time, could improve their minds and develop the capacity to argue with and influence government. Nyström declared that he wanted to put books rather than weapons into the hands of the workers (Wallerius 1988: 33-4). Others in the workers movement did not agree with his emphasis on education. Their slogan was 'food first, education second'. They believed the whole basis of society had to be changed before workers could obtain justice.

It was this latter group that helped form the Social Democratic party and gradually drew separate unions into a national organisation for workers. By the 1890s they were strong enough to challenge the combined strength of big

business and government. In Sundsvall in 1891 timber workers went on strike for better conditions. Their employers locked them out and as the strike worsened the government brought in troops. In a situation reminiscent of the shearers' strike in Australia the police fired on strikers killing dozens of them. Instead of breaking the workers movement the government's actions strengthened it. The crisis in Sundsvall convinced many in the labour movement that they needed to work on the political as well as the industrial level and to do that their leaders needed to be schooled in the language and methods of the politicians. The 'folkhuset' or ‘people’s house’ built by the unemployed Sundsvall timber workers is an example of this shift in emphasis. The architectural beauty of this meetinghouse reflects the workers demand for the sort of pleasant and aesthetic surroundings that the wealthy enjoyed for leisure time activities. The difference was that they built their recreational environment during the lockout whereas rich timber merchants like the Dickson's bought theirs with the profits they earned with sweated labour.

Three popular movements

It was in this period at the end of the nineteenth century that the three main popular movements - the free churches, the temperance societies and the workers - began to organise adult education activities on a much larger scale. There was considerable overlap between the movements. Oscar Olsson (1877-1950) is one of the best examples of this. He was active in both temperance and workers movements and from 1902 on and promoted the study circle method in the study associations that they founded. He saw the study circle as a self-educating activity. He was concerned with the form of the study circle as much as its content. He believed that books were a prime source of knowledge, but that books were best studied in a group where the ideas they raised could be discussed, arguments sharpened and true democracy practiced. According to Olsson the study circle should develop the personality of the participant and a commitment to active citizenship (Tömqvist 1996: 303). The content should be general and although he campaigned for the abolition of alcohol and a socialist political order he felt that politics should be left outside the study circle.

Olsson is also a major contributor to the development of another of adult study association, the Folkuniversitet. The development of the Folkuniversitet is a complicated story and has already been told in an earlier article published in this journal in July, 1998. There were others who proceeded him. I have already mentioned the society for the 'dissemination of recent knowledge' many of whose members were university men. Berzelius is perhaps the most famous but his friend Carl Palmstedt, professor and rector at Göterborg's Chalmerska craft school, also started a study circle for craftspeople in 1847. The circle met twice a month and listened to music and talks and made use of a small collection of books. These were sporadic attempts by individual lecturers and graduates to give ordinary people the benefit of university knowledge and culture, an idea that had been canvassed during the 1825 school commission. Although these ideas were kept alive by people like Palmstedt, Pieter Wieselgren and Staffan Hedlund, inspiration for a more thorough going form of university extension came from England.

In the 1860s Oxford began to hold occasional lectures for ordinary people in response to the criticism that it should do more with its resources than merely

provide an education for 1500 sons of the aristocracy. In 1867, supported by The North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women, James Stuart of Cambridge pushed for 'an extension of the university', in other words, a regular lecture series for ordinary people. If the people, and particularly women, could not go to Cambridge then Cambridge should go the people. The topics for these lectures generally coincided with subjects that a lecturer taught at university. These included history, literature, the classics and to a lesser extent the natural sciences. As local interest in the lectures grew, more practical topics were also included. Australia, like Sweden, copied the university extension movement and the mechanics institutes that can be found in so many Australian towns were a favoured location for the delivery of such lectures.

In the twentieth century social and historical factors continued to affect adult education development in all of the countries mentioned above. But it was in Sweden, where the ground had been so thoroughly prepared from the seventeenth century on, that adult education flourished. It would require another article to show, in a scholarly way, that social organisation on rural farms and industrial estates predisposed adult Swedes to group meetings and that Sweden has a long history of associations, societies and organisations of all kinds. It is still the country with the most number of such organisations per capita in the world. It is sufficient to say that the social and historical conditions that gave rise to adult education in Sweden also gave rise to Sweden’s most powerful political party.

The Social Democratic party has not forgotten its roots in the temperance, worker and free church movements and has generously supported adult education while in government. Given that they have ruled with very few interruptions for the last half-century this is of considerable advantage to adult education in Sweden. This article has focused on social and historical factors in the development of Swedish adult education. As a new century begins it is clear that social forces are continuing to affect the sector. The effects are both good and bad. The demand for credentials threatens to undermine the commitment of study associations and folk high schools to courses that are based on people’s intrinsic motivation to learn rather than to collect credit points. On the other hand Sweden’s entry into the European union gives greater scope to the associations in its role of informing the public about changes via study circles. One thing is certain. The infrastructure built up over four centuries gives Sweden one of the best-resourced and most widely accepted systems of adult education in the world.

References

Runeby, N. (1980). 'Ett Fostrat folk: till frågan om Per Brahe och den nationella kulturen' in Gunnar T Westin (ed). *Braheskolan under fyra sekler: en minnesskrift*, Stiftelsen Braheskolan, Visingsö.
Löfgren Ribberfalk, I. (1995), *Skolan på ön: om Braheskolan under fyra århundraden*, Grenna Tryckeri AB, Grenna.
Britannica, Macropaedia, vol 28, p327.
Wallerius, B. (1988).*Vetenskapens vägar. Om akademiker och folkbildningsarbete*, Folkuniversitetet, Stockholm.
Åberg, A. (1985). *A concise history of Sweden*, LTs förlag, Stockholm.
Törnqvist, I. (1996). *Oscar Olsson Folkbildaren. I synnerhet hans tankar om univeristeten roll i folkbildningsarbetet*, Sober Förlag, Stockholm.