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**ABSTRACT**

Recent reform in Finnish elementary-level schools is affecting secondary and higher education as well. The five articles in this Bulletin describe some of the changes. "The Goals of School Democracy Reform" is a statement of educational goals: a democratic citizenry, educational planning coincident with national goals, the guarantee of democratic rights to all within the educational system, and increased student motivation. "School Democracy in Senior Secondary Schools" describes School Councils, established by Parliamentary legislation and elected in each school by students and teachers with equal representation for each, to coordinate educational planning and classroom instruction. "Period Teaching" describes a scheduling innovation that allows for concentration and continuity of study on one subject. "The Non-Graded Senior Secondary School" is described as a three year experiment, yet to be completely evaluated, which permits students to pursue discrete subjects made up of units (courses) that are individually paced and allow for graduation by course rather than by grade level. "Research Project on Non-Graded Senior Secondary School" describes the progress of the research aimed at investigating what occurs and what directions are being taken within the two experimental senior secondary school programs. (JH)

# INFORMATION BULLETIN

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ABOUT EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS IN THE SENIOR  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS (GYMNASIUMS)

Edited by Maija-Liisa Pyykkönen

## Preface

The adaption of the comprehensive school system will affect to the secondary and higher education, too. Many plans have already been made and many experiment projects have been carried out in various secondary schools (gymnasiums).

We will here describe briefly two most interesting innovation projects: the implementation of the school democracy and the so-called experiment on study periods. The school council system have already been put into effect in all senior secondary schools. Some schools are carrying out the experiment on non-graded senior secondary school. Research is also combined with this experimentation as an essential part of the total scheme.

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## THE GOALS OF SCHOOL DEMOCRACY REFORM

Erkki Aho

By means of school democracy reform, the following is attempted:

- to develop in students a necessary basic preparedness as citizens in society, by which to safeguard the democratic development of society
- to develop educational planning within institutes of learning with the goals set given national direction
- to guarantee democratic rights to all persons working within the school organisation and
- to increase students motivation for studying.

### The development in students of a basic necessary preparedness as members of a democratic society

Efforts are made to an ever widening degree to bring democracy into the family circle and place of work as well as municipal and state life. In this respect, lowering the age at which one has the right to vote is of obvious significance. A condition for the realization of democracy, however, is that there should be active democratic control. In other words, every citizen should be in a position to participate in life within the society and to express his own views, starting from the decision-making stage. He should also be capable of thinking critically for himself and of continually developing societal organisation to be more democratic. Every citizen should be able to use, both efficiently and from an equal standing, those rights offered to him by the legislature.

Lowering of the voting-age on the one hand, and on the other the increasing requirements for democratising different sectors within society, impose new requirements on the school. Students step straight from school into society in possession of the right to vote, and in this respect

as fully empowered citizens. For their part they should be directly capable of enriching society and of availing themselves of those rights which, for example, increasing democracy in jobs and enterprises offers them, while at the same time fulfilling those obligations that accompany the increase in possibilities for using influence.

Placed as a central part of the school's goals should be the development of a fundamental preparedness necessary for building a more democratic society.

### The development of educational planning within institutes of Learning

The major part of school activities concentrates on studying. When deliberating ways in which to increase the possibilities given to members of the school community of influencing decision-making that affects themselves, this in particular means increasing the possibility to influence what should be studied at school and how studies should be conducted. Up till now experiments in school democracy have at any rate to a certain extent failed because influence was limited to activities other than actual study. Interest in results had already weakened 1-2 terms later.

Increasing teachers' and pupils' possibilities for influence in the field of studies presupposes noticeable enlargement of educational planning within the schools. A working group also places this improvement in planning activity as being a central part of reform goals. In practice planning within an institute of learning means in each school:

- explaining to teachers and students what are the nationally defined goals in the functioning of the school and the state's general objectives regarding curriculum
- drawing up a general plan for the academic year where the curriculum's part objectives are defined and a scheme drawn up of methods to be employed
- dividing the academic year plan into shorter period schemes and planning how to judge the results of this work.

### Guaranteeing democratic rights to the members of the school community

The legal security of students can be thought of in two ways. Firstly, students' legal rights concerning organization and disciplinary courses of action; and secondly, with regard to judgement of their study performance.

The core of the issue relates to general legal security, and thus in particular reform concerned with student selfgovernment is closely connected with attempts to also improve the individual's legal security.

### Increasing students' motivation towards study

At the moments schools have noticeable difficulties in motivating students towards study. Indications of motivation having decreased are, amongst others, disciplinary problems in the classroom and cases of students playing truant.

It is extremely difficult to thoroughly uncover the reasons for the decrease in motivation, especially when these reasons are not exclusively related to school and study situations. The reason may partly lie in a lack of clarity in the above-mentioned part-objectives of the curriculum, or even in the absence of such goals as well as in a partial unsuitableness of what is being taught. As long as the full goals of the work are not clear to students and teachers, not to mention the aims of a specific study-period, this will lead to study being built up around so-called extrinsic motivation, such as the threat of disciplinary action and certain means of reward. This kind of situation cannot exist without effecting a decrease in study motivation, especially in the case of advanced students.

Reluctance or possible negative attitudes towards study on the part of the students cannot be without effect in lowering teachers' motivation towards their work. This again lowers their interest in the work and their willingness, for example, to plan



teaching for individual students on the assumption that each student should be guaranteed the possibility of learning those skills and knowledge which he is in need of. In this way is easily formed a circle from which it is very difficult to escape and study is given a forced character.

School democracy and in particular the planning of teaching within each school can create conditions for an improved teaching level and can increase both teachers' and students' motivation towards work. The reform will also help to change the teacher's role of a distributor of knowledge from teacher to student into that of planning work and giving guidance as a sequel to study. The experiences which have been received from planning teaching right from the lowest grade in comprehensive school give occasion for optimism in this respect. Conditions for success, however, mean taking into account in the new situation both national curriculum and individual school curriculum development, and above all teacher training. To a certain extent it is a matter of bringing the reform into the present activity of the school so that results can only be expected after a rather long period of time.

#### SCHOOL DEMOCRACY IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Maija-Liisa Pyykkönen

In the late nineteen sixties, there was discussion about increasing students' means to influence the decisions made in Secondary Schools. The demands made were based on the strong reform movement that was going on in the universities. Several committees and work groups were appointed to investigate the matter. The result was an Act on School Councils passed by Parliament at the end of 1971. The first School Councils were elected in February 1973. The second election took place in November 1973. According to the Act there is a School Council

in every Secondary School to supervise and facilitate instruction and education in general. The Councils are elected by the school's teachers and students for one year at a time. Teachers and students have an equal number of representatives. Depending on the size of the school, the number of representatives in the Council will vary between 6 and 10.

The Council has the right of decision in matters pertaining to discipline and undisturbed working conditions. It confirms the rules of various school clubs and decides on joint school activities. Its most important task, however, is to coordinate general educational planning and to initiate and continue planning connected with class-room instruction. It may submit recommendations on development of the curriculum as well as on the textbooks used.

The schools have tried to create various forms of cooperation between the school and the homes, but the results have been rather modest. We have for years had Parents' Council in Secondary Schools, too. Together with the implementation of the School Council system, the parents' opportunities to participate in school activities have also been improved. In accordance with the rules the School Council has to hold yearly four meetings together with the Parents' Council.

From a general point of view, the already implemented student participation has led to a larger transfer of responsibilities to the students than for instance in the other Scandinavian countries. The arrangement of the reform in question takes a rather long time. In the seventies the school authorities will pay special attention to the implementation of this reform and to making of the necessary adjustments. It is expected that the reform will activate the students as well as the teachers to participate in innovation of activities within the school. The practical implementation in the class-room of the objectives and the curricula that have been set up for the whole nation requires active participation from both.

## PERIOD TEACHING

Touko Voutilainen

The period system means that the year is divided into a certain number of equally long sequences, or period. In Finland the most common period system is the 6-period system the length of each period being about 32 work days.

The period change is most clearly shown in that the curriculum changes, some subjects are no longer taught, and some others are taken up. During the period change the pupils usually receive grades indicating their success during the past period.

The purpose of period teaching is to make possible the most suitable study rhythm for each subject (= the frequency of the teaching events and the changes in the frequency), and to guarantee the teaching a certain continuity at least during a part of the school years. Continuity means the immediacy with which a new teaching event can follow the previous one, for example if the previous lesson has been the day before the continuity is greater than if the previous lesson had been a week earlier.

The most important factors contributing to the importance of the continuity of the teaching are

- 1) learning units which presupposes the simultaneous mastery of the relevant parts of the whole and
- 2) enhancing and maintaining learning motivation.

Since the number of lessons is not great enough in any subject to guarantee sufficient continuity throughout the semester, such continuity can be attained only by concentrating the lessons into periods. If the extensiveness of a certain subject of a class is given in weekly hours per year, and if, for example the amount is 2 weekly hours per year, this can be changed into weekly hours per period by multiplying it by the number of periods, 6, and thus the extensiveness will be 12 hours every week during one period. If this subject course is taken during one period there are 12 lessons in a week, if taken during 2 periods there

will be 6 lessons per week, and during 3 periods 4 lessons per week, etc. 6 lessons per week guarantees quite a good continuity since then a lesson can be held every work day of the week.

Concentration gives certain other advantages:

- 1) All subjects are not dependent on being studied simultaneously and the pupil need concentrate only on some of them during each period. The present disconnectedness can be avoided without giving up any of the central subjects.
- 2) The teacher has less classes during each period which increases the teacher's concentration and makes the planning of teaching more efficient.
- 3) The study of different subjects can be made alternately in a quite deliberate way; for example if two foreign languages are studied they do not have to be always taken at the same time.
- 4) There are no minor subjects with a small number of hours; instead all subjects are considered as major, the objects of concentrated and continuous study.
- 5) During the empty periods additional teaching can be given to those who have fallen behind in their studies.
- 6) By combining the courses of one period into a wellbalanced, meaningful totality, a purposefulness and definite goal are brought to studying, which in our time is not too far away.

Period studying was tried out for the first time in 1950-51.

In Finland it is common in the night secondary schools and now becoming more common also in the regular day schools.

Several research works have been made about its effect on the pupils' attitudes and learning results, and the results received from them can be considered positive.

**THE NON-GRADED SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL**

Touko Voutilainen

The experiment in non-graded school started in a night secondary school in autumn 1970. Classes were replaced by courses (units), the extensiveness of which was the same in all subjects and the contents of which were carefully defined. The courses within each subject had to be taken in a certain sequence, but taking one subject was independent of taking another subject. When all the partcourses in a subject had been taken the whole program was completed, and after passing all the courses the pupil graduated.

The experiment in the non-graded system was extended in the autumn of 1972 to the upper grades (10th to 12th grades) of two day schools. The ground to be covered within each subject is divided into courses, the number of which varies from 3 to 14 depending on the subject. A course consists of 31 to 32 hours. Each course is studied during a period so that a lesson is held every day. The grade received for the course is marked in the pupil's study book. If one fails the course there is a second try, but if this also is failed the course must be taken again. However, there are some exceptions to this rule. The grades received for each course are independent of grades received for another course. Each course passed is a final accomplishment.

A review, approximately one page long, concerning each course, its content, methods, emphasis and mode of control is mimeographed or printed and given to all pupils. At the beginning of each period every pupil has to choose a certain minimum amount of courses, but more may also be chosen. Freedom of choice is relatively large, and the restrictions are defined by special rules. However, all the pupils have to study a certain amount of all the central subjects.

The non-graded system makes possible the following improvements, among others, compared with the present system:

- 1) the pupil cannot fail a whole year, and thus does not have to repeat anything already passed,

- 2) after an interruption caused by illness or some other reason the pupil can continue his studies from where he left them,
- 3) the pupil can choose the extensiveness of his program taking into consideration his energies and capacities. For example two pupils can study the same program in its final form, but one has more courses than the other during the same period and thus needs a shorter time for graduation,
- 4) a pupil who has difficulties in his studies can evenly delay them without having to fail a year, or he can - if he is able to - speed up his studies progressively without having to "jump over" a class,
- 5) while studying, only a few units are concentrated upon at one time and thus the continuity of the studies is great,
- 6) the pupil can form in advance a picture of what he has to learn during a course and he has a definite goal, at the most 6 weeks ahead, which is in a sense a final accomplishment,
- 7) it is very easy to combine new, professional or general culture courses to a teaching program consisting of course units. Also the programs of two schools using this system can easily be combined into a completely new study curriculum.

The experiment was linked to a rather wide research program carried out by the Institute of Education, University of Helsinki.

The experiences so far have been predominantly positive. Especially noticeable have been the increase in motivation and the great decrease in non-attendance. No doubt the learning results have also improved, although this has not yet been clearly demonstrated. The non-graded system makes more efficient use of the school's space and tends to lower rather than raise total expenses. A special problem which is being closely followed is the effect of non-gradedness on the social relationships between pupils. The number of pupils in course groups is to some extent constantly fluctuating.

The experimental phase in the day schools lasts 3 years, after which a final report will be prepared and the decision made whether to continue the experiment or not.

## RESEARCH PROJECT ON NON-GRADED SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

Leena Kava

The experimentation of a non-graded senior secondary school was begun in Helsinki in two senior secondaries during the Autumn of 1972. The academic year of these two schools was divided into six "periods", each lasting six weeks. Progress through the senior secondary was made by following courses of different subjects according to the student's own study programme.

The experiment is associated with a research project being carried out by the Institute of Education, University of Helsinki. The basic aim of the whole project is to investigate what occurs in the senior secondary schools when a change is made to the non-graded system, and what form developments take. The study is based on practice, and results can be used in the future developments of the non-graded system. The project is composed of several individual investigations. Studies in the following areas, for example, are now in progress:

- Teachers, pupils and parents attitudes to the non-graded school before the experiment and in its early phase.
- Diffusion of innovation in one school.
- Development of the teaching process in the non-graded senior secondary school during one "period".
- The ways through the non-graded senior secondary schools.
- The innovation process in the non-graded senior secondary school.

The original purpose of this individual investigation was to give a formative evaluation of the experiment for the time of its duration, but as problems appeared in both these schools with regard to implementation of the innovation in its initial stages, the research was focused towards also explaining those factors which have either inhibited or facilitated the innovation. A further practical purpose would then arise: the guidance of teachers and pupils toward future experiments.

## The purpose and methods of the research

1. The research endeavours to analyse the implementation of the non-graded senior secondary school during the first experimental year and its consequences from the different points of view of teachers and students;
2. To investigate to what extent the results of the experiment are in the directions strived for;
3. To analyse what stages of the innovation process according to Dalin's theoretical frame of reference can be identified in these two cases;
4. To describe what factors internal and external to the school facilitate or inhibit the implementation of the innovation in these schools. In addition, the above points will be specified by explaining what factors associated with these school's internal organisation and social relations are connected with creativity of the school.

The research takes the form of case-studies. The methods used were a questionnaire to both teachers and students and also interviews of the teachers of these schools. The data was gathered in the spring of 1973 and at present is at the stage of analysis and interpretation.

The following information have been gathered:

### a. Interviews

- main rationale and initial stages of the experiment (background of the innovation)
- decision to start the experiment (relation of decisionmaking to internal organisation)
- information at initial stages (relation of information to internal organisation)
- attitudes towards innovation (innovativeness and relation of norms and values to internal organisation)
- need for the experimentation
- schools capacity to implement the innovation (relation of resources to internal organisation)
- planning and participation in it (cooperation)
- support during the experiment (eg. training, equipment, funds)



and psychological support)

- leadership of the experiment (relations between school management and other staff, their relation to internal organisation)
- means of evaluating the experiment
- diffusion of information of innovation
- factors inhibiting or facilitating the experiment (relation of these to internal organisation)

On the basis of these points one can isolate the following factors associated with creativity of the school:

- decision-making
- information process
- relations between management and other staff
- internal relations between staff
- cooperation.

b. The questionnaire

The questionnaire deals with 1) the importance of the aims of the innovation, their degree of implementation during the first year and their later attainability, 2) the innovation's expected and unexpected consequences from the point of view, for example, of the following points:

- study progress
- schedule of studies
- evaluation (reports) and tests
- social relations
- division and amount of work
- success at school.