

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 112 317

CG 010 090

AUTHOR Wetterstrom, Magnhild
 TITLE Student Democracy in Grades 1-6. Educational and Psychological Interactions, Number 46, 1974.
 INSTITUTION School of Education, Malmo (Sweden). Dept. of Educational and Psychological Research.
 PUB DATE Mar 74
 NOTE 29p.; Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.76 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
 DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Environment; *Democratic Values; Elementary Education; Elementary School Students; Foreign Countries; *Interaction Process Analysis; *Power Structure; Research Projects; *Student Participation; Student Teacher Relationship
 IDENTIFIERS *Sweden

ABSTRACT

After a short introductory discussion, the results are presented from a series of mapping studies in which headmasters, supervisory teachers, student teachers and different teacher and student groups have expressed their views on co-influence in the school--how they experience the situation today and how they would like the influence to be divided in the future. Assessments are reported from teachers and students both at ordinary schools and at more progressive schools. The results indicate a generally positive attitude towards increased student influence, but also reveal several specific problems that emerge when this attitude is expressed in more concrete terms. (Author)

 * Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
 * materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
 * to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
 * reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
 * of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
 * via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
 * responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
 * supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *

ED112317

bulletin from

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATIONAL AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
MALMÖ, SWEDEN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPR
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRE
SENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

educational and psychological interactions

Wetterström, M.:

STUDENT DEMOCRACY IN GRADES 1-6

No. 46

March 1974

06 11 1974

STUDENT DEMOCRACY IN GRADES 1-6

Magnhild Wetterström.

Wetterström, M. Student democracy in grades 1-6. Educational and Psychological Interactions (Malmö, Sweden: School of Education), No. 46, 1974.

After a short introductory discussion, the results are presented from a series of mapping studies in which headmasters, supervisory teachers, student teachers and different teacher and student groups have expressed their views on co-influence in the school - how they experience the situation today and how they would like the influence to be divided in the future. Assessments are reported from teachers and students both at ordinary schools and at more progressive schools. The results indicate a generally positive attitude towards increased student influence, but also reveal several specific problems that emerge when this attitude is expressed in more concrete terms.

Keywords: Democratic values, student participation, social attitudes; **educational level:** grades 1-6 in the comprehensive school.

CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND	3
1.1 School democracy as a current issue	3
1.2 Why school democracy?	4
2. INVESTIGATIONS	8
2.1 Mapping of opinions and attitudes	8
2.1.1 Background and problems	8
2.1.2 Examples of results	10
2.2 Some special studies	17
2.2.1 Student suggestions for school improvements	17
2.2.2 Students' Council activities extended to grades 1-6	18
3. SUMMARY	22
4. REFERENCES	26

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 School democracy as a current issue

During the latter part of the 1960's, a number of student demonstrations occurred both in Sweden and abroad. They varied in violence and size, but were in general directed against what the students felt to be too much control from above within the educational sector and society as a whole.

The mass media conducted a lively debate for and against a democratization of different branches of education, and in May 1968 it was formally stated that the school in Sweden should "in its forms of work and its organization function as a democratic society" (Aktuellt från Skolöverstyrelsen, 68/69, p.1). During the spring of 1968 this positive attitude towards greater school democracy was manifested in the appointment of what is known as the Sisk group (from the Swedish: Samverkan i skolan = Cooperation in school). This group was appointed by the National Board of Education, and its purpose was described briefly thus: "The task of the committee is to elucidate needs, opportunities and forms of cooperation in the school." (Sisk, 1971, p.3.)

Some experiments in more democratic working forms had earlier been started spontaneously at Eira School in Stockholm, and the Sisk group helped in arranging regular experimentation there during the school year 1968/69.

The peak of the debate on school democracy in Sweden seemed to be reached when the 1969 curriculum for the comprehensive school (abbrev. Lgr 69) was published. The curriculum states explicitly: "The school is to lay the foundation for and further develop those qualities in the students that can maintain and reinforce the democratic principles of tolerance, cooperation and the equal rights of all people." (Lgr 69, pp. 14-15.)

An examination of headlines containing the word "democracy" in the journal 'Skolvärlden', issued by the Swedish Union of Teachers, reflects fairly well the way in which the debate developed during the years 1967-70. In Box 1 we can see that the number of headings connected with democracy increases during 1968, continues to increase during 1969 and then during 1970 returns to its original size. It seems as if the wave of discussion in the mass media abated during 1970, and the same applies to many of the activities in the field of school democracy. The experimentation at Eira school was stopped without any direct following-up or evaluation.

Box 1. Headlines containing the word "democracy" in the journal 'Skolvärlden', 1967-70

	Headings containing the word "democracy"	
	Leading article	Elsewhere
1967	1	0
1968	3	4
1969	2	10
1970	0	2

The Sisk group concluded its work during the spring of 1971. The group's final report finished with the following assessment of the need for cooperation in the school: "The debate on co-influence - co-responsibility shows that there is in the individual a stifled need to be able to influence his own environment." (Sisk, 1971, p.47.)

1.2 Why school democracy?

Why has it been recommended that the school should function as a democratic society? What are the ulterior motives? What advantages and disadvantages are reckoned with in these working forms? For comparison let us briefly study an example of how corresponding problems have been tackled in the business world.

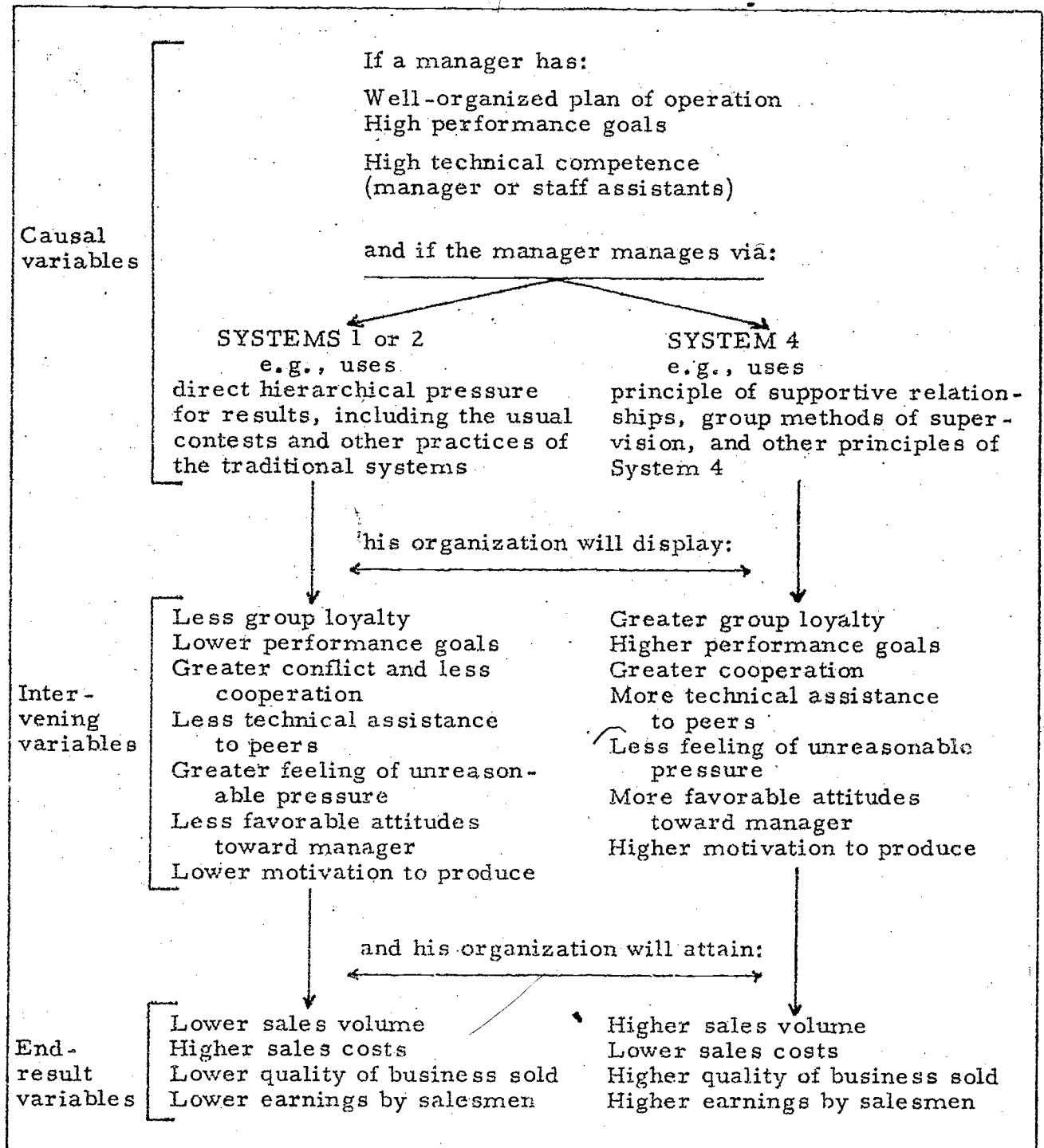
In his study of different organizational systems, Likert has divided these systems on a 4 point scale as follows (Likert, 1967):

Authoritative		Participative	
Exploitive authoritative	Benevolent authoritative	Consultative	Participative group
System 1	System 2	System 3	System 4

On the basis of this argument, Likert has constructed a questionnaire and considers himself that he has reached a series of conclusions about the sequences a well-organized enterprise goes through in its development when influenced by different organizational systems (Box 2).

As we can see, the outline in Box 2 gives a very positive picture of what can be expected to happen if participatory forms for group work are introduced within an organization.

Box 2. Different organizational systems (according to Likert)



That similar positive arguments have occurred to the school authorities is indicated in one of the publications distributed by the Swedish Board of Education, "Study material for school principals", concerning the 1969 curriculum. It is stated there that the democratic school should be characterized by tolerance, cooperation and equality of rights. The key words

for democracy are said to be commonsense, progress, happiness, freedom and equality (p. 9). There can hardly be any doubt about the desirability of such consequences of changed forms of work. Our actual knowledge in this field is, however, inadequate. Ten years ago Charters summed up the situation thus (1963, p. 784 f.):

"Much good is presumed to flow from a democratic style of leadership in schools. It enhances the motivation ... it brings about a high quality of performance ... has a salutary effect to the interpersonal relations ... The relations are task-oriented; teamwork is enhanced. ... promote self-respect, personal security, a feeling of belongingness, a sense of success, and generally an aura of well-being and satisfaction."

But he continued:

"The evidence produced by educators on these assertions is slim and, for the most part, untrustworthy." (p. 785)

But "democratized forms of work" can also be experienced negatively, as a threat to an organization, as is shown by the precautionary measures taken in the experimentation with partially self-governing groups in Norway (Thorsrud & Emery, 1969). - Is then a democratization of the forms of work a real threat to an organization? In the opinion of Etzioni (1966, pp. 9, 10), an organization is normally characterized by:

1. Consciously planned division of power and responsibility.
2. One or more power centres that control and steer the common efforts within the organization towards the stated goals.
3. Replaceable staff, so that unsuitable persons can be removed or transferred and their tasks allotted to others.

In other words, one or more power centres direct the organization towards the proposed objectives by means of a planned division of power and responsibility. If the organization is threatened from the inside, it defends itself by replacing unsuitable (threatening) persons. Now if this type of power centre decides to introduce democracy, the planned division of power and responsibility can admittedly exist during the introductory period, but hardly after the democratic system has completely come into force. Once the power and responsibility have been placed in more hands, it becomes more and more difficult for the organization to plan this change. Perhaps there is, however, an optimal point where the power and responsibility have been decentralized as far as is possible without setting aside the need of the organization to be able to plan the division of this power and responsibility. It should be possible for such an organization to remain open for innovations and growth processes without getting out of balance.

Some of the examples given above are taken from the business world which, with its clearly expressed demands for efficiency, has experimented with democratic forms of work in order to raise production. The situation

is somewhat different in the schools, where it is a question not only of efficiency but also of the forming of personalities. The Swedish Education Act puts it this way "The school should through its spirit and environment train the students in self-reliance and independent judgement . . ." (Education Act, 1962, Chap. 5, §1). It is, of course, fortunate if this training can be combined with forms of work that have in addition the effect of promoting a pleasant atmosphere and increasing efficiency. In the opinion of the writer, however, the weightiest motive for introducing school democracy remains that which is expressed in a memorandum to the minutes of the Council of State on September 18, 1970:

"A living democracy requires a democratic educational system."

"Democracy is more than an organizational principle: cooperation within the educational system helps to ensure that democratic rights are used and tested in all walks of life. The inner reformation of the educational system by means of increased cooperation is therefore of great importance for the entire social, cultural and economic development."

2. INVESTIGATIONS

2.1 Mapping of opinions and attitudes

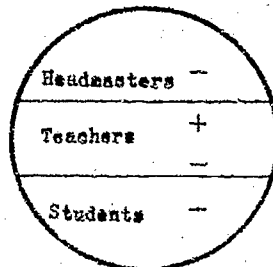
2.1.1 Background and problems

With reference to a definition made by the Norwegian industrial psychologists, Thorsrud and Emery (1969) concerning the implication of increased industrial democracy, we can say that by increased school democracy we mean in general terms an extension of the influence the individual has over the work of the school that he participates in and has insight into.

The problem area we are dealing with here can be described in the following way:

The daily work of those active within the school can be divided into two main categories: (1) Activities that affect the entire school. (2) Activities that affect the individual class. Teachers feature in both these work situations, but their role varies: in the first situation they are subordinate (in relation to headmasters), while in the second situation they have a leading role (in relation to the students). If one advocates increased opportunities for the individual to use his influence in the school, this must necessarily imply a reduction in the influence of the headmasters. For the students it means increased influence, while for the teachers it normally means more influence in situation 1 and less in situation 2. Somewhat simplified, the situation can be outlined as in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The trends in redistribution of decision-making in a development of democratic forms of work in a school unit



It is not surprising that an objective that leads to or can be felt to lead to such consequences for some of the parties concerned is given a mixed reception.

Probably the role that the individual occupies within a system also influences his experiences of how various decision-making processes function. If the school now strives for a change in the forms of work towards greater democracy, the first step in such a development must be a mapping of the attitudes of the parties concerned and their experiences of the decision-making procedures that exist today. As a natural second step then follows

the extent to which the decision-making procedures should be changed and in which areas, together with whether the categories concerned are unanimous in what they wish to be done.

With these aims in view, a series of mapping studies of school democracy in grades 1-6 were conducted in 1969-71 by means of three questionnaires (I-III).

The first questionnaire contains questions of a general nature referring to:

- (a) experiences of the division of influence within school and class
- (b) desired division of influence in school and class in the school system of the future
- (c) opinions with regard to the "ideal" headmaster, teacher and student
- (d) choice of working form for school democracy
- (e) choice of type of leader.

The second questionnaire is intended to clarify the extent to which the students are permitted to participate in the decisions that are made at the classroom level. In contrast to the more general questions in the first questionnaire, the respondents are here asked to state how decisions have been made during the school year in a number of concrete situations. In addition, the teachers are asked to state what negative consequences they possibly fear can result from increased student influence.

The third questionnaire again contained questions of a more general nature concerning the present division of influence within the class and the extent to which the respondent would like to change the situation.

Data were collected from the following groups; the relevant questionnaire(s) is indicated within parentheses for each group:

- (a) all headmasters in Malmö (I)
- (b) all supervisory teachers at schools without headmasters in Malmö (I)
- (c) a sample (25%) of all teachers in normal classes in Malmö (called the Teacher Group) (I; II)
- (d) all class teachers in normal classes at Munkhätte School, an experiment and demonstration school linked with the Malmö School of Education (I)
- (e) a sample (10%) of student teachers at the Malmö School of Education (I)
- (f) all class teachers in normal classes at Eira School in Stockholm, a school at which experimentation with school democracy was being conducted during the period of investigation (I; II)
- (g) seven randomly selected classes from each of the grades 2-6 in Malmö and their teachers (II; III)
- (h) all students in normal classes at Eira School in grades 2-6 (II; III).

2.1.2 Examples of results

Authority is sometimes classified as representing professional or personal competence and sometimes as an accepted formal position as leader in a system. The teacher in grades 1-6 is in the fortunate, and perhaps unusual position of normally being the undisputed authority in both these respects. How then do the teachers in grades 1-6 use their authority when training the students to make independent decisions?

In one report, the answers from the second questionnaire are presented, in which the three groups of teachers named above assess the actual influence the students have in a number of classroom situations and possible negative consequences of increased student influence. The sample of situations used in the questionnaire comprises the results from a preliminary study, the purpose of which was to obtain relevant classroom situations for student influence. (The preliminary study resulted in a number of suggested decision situations, 26 of which were extracted on the principles that they can be said to represent different "degrees of difficulty", i. e. the extent to which student influence is feasible, and that they as far as possible had been assessed differently by teachers in this respect.)

The respondents had to decide between four different types of decision-making for each situation, namely:

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. |
| The teacher decides on the basis of his/her experience what he/she thinks will benefit everybody. | The teacher decides after hearing what the students think. | The teacher and the students discuss the problem as two equal partners and together reach a decision. | The pupils discuss, led by the teacher. What is desired by the majority of the students is carried out. |

The different types are intended to reflect an approximate continuum, in which type 1 is the "authoritarian", teacher-led pole, while type 4 is the student-democratic counterpart.

The teacher was also asked to state for each situation which possible negative consequences must be reckoned with in decision-making of type 4, i. e. when the decisions are made by the students themselves.

The 1962 curriculum that was in force when the study was being made was examined and insofar as it gave any special directives as to how decisions should be made in the situations in question, these directives were noted, together with the account given of each question.

The results obtained show that to a large extent the teacher personally makes the decisions within the class. Similarly it emerges that the teachers are most restrictive as far as student influence is concerned in decisions involving the teaching, but also largely want to make the decisions themselves on many other questions. The pupils are given most opportunity of

exerting influence in recreational questions. Further, it proved to be almost consistently so that the teachers at Eira School gave their students most influence over the decisions, followed by those at Munkhätte School and finally the general group of teachers in Malmö. Despite these differences in the degree of actual student influence (such as it is reflected in the teachers' reports) a definite pattern has crystallized, so that certain situations are led to a greater degree by the teacher than others in all three groups studied.

The ranking of situations that has emerged within these different teacher groups has later been further substantiated by investigations made among the students. Thus a final ranking of these decision situations could be made, according to a criterion described as "suitability for decentralized decision-making", which is based on the experiences and assessments of both teachers and students.

In his book "Varför demokrati?" (Why democracy?), in which he has analysed the problems of democracy, Alf Ross has the following to say about the training aspect: "Democracy cannot be 'introduced' from one day to the next ... experience has shown that the best training in democracy lies in the gradual acquisition of democracy. Practice makes perfect." (Ross, 1968, p. 109.)

With such an approach, it becomes natural to recommend that a training program of some kind should be constructed and tested in order to give the students the opportunity of training decision-making within the school setting. This program should then be planned so that the students are successively given the opportunity of making decisions themselves, wherein one lets them also take the consequences of these decisions. The experience of and responsibility for the wrongly made decisions, with their negative consequences, can lead to the next decision being made with more due consideration. Thus a training program should be built up in such a way that the students can in the beginning practise on situations in which possible negative consequences are limited, and then successively go on to more responsible decisions as they become more mature and more accustomed to decision-making. This kind of program should also be based on and take into consideration the opinions and practical experience of the teacher. One of the purposes of the investigation has been to try to obtain a certain amount of information on these questions. In the author's opinion, the grouping of situations from mainly student-led to mainly teacher-controlled decision situations that we have been able to establish in this study provides a suitable starting point for the construction of a systematic training program in decision-making for students within the school setting.

The fears expressed by the teachers of negative consequences of increased student-influence have above all been centred around a subsequent drop in the quality of the decisions (24% of the comments), the difficulties the students would have in agreeing (11% of the comments) and disciplinary problems for the teacher (5% of the comments).

Rather surprisingly, only 5% have given reasons involving the external organization, such as the timetable and room disposition, and none have clearly stated that it would be difficult for the teacher from a purely practical point of view to carry out the students' decisions. 4% of the comments take up the problem that it would take too much time and only 2% point out that the dominating individuals would not allow the more reserved students to make their voices heard. - But it should be remembered that about 50% of the teachers asked have not written any comments at all and that some have only commented on a few stray questions.

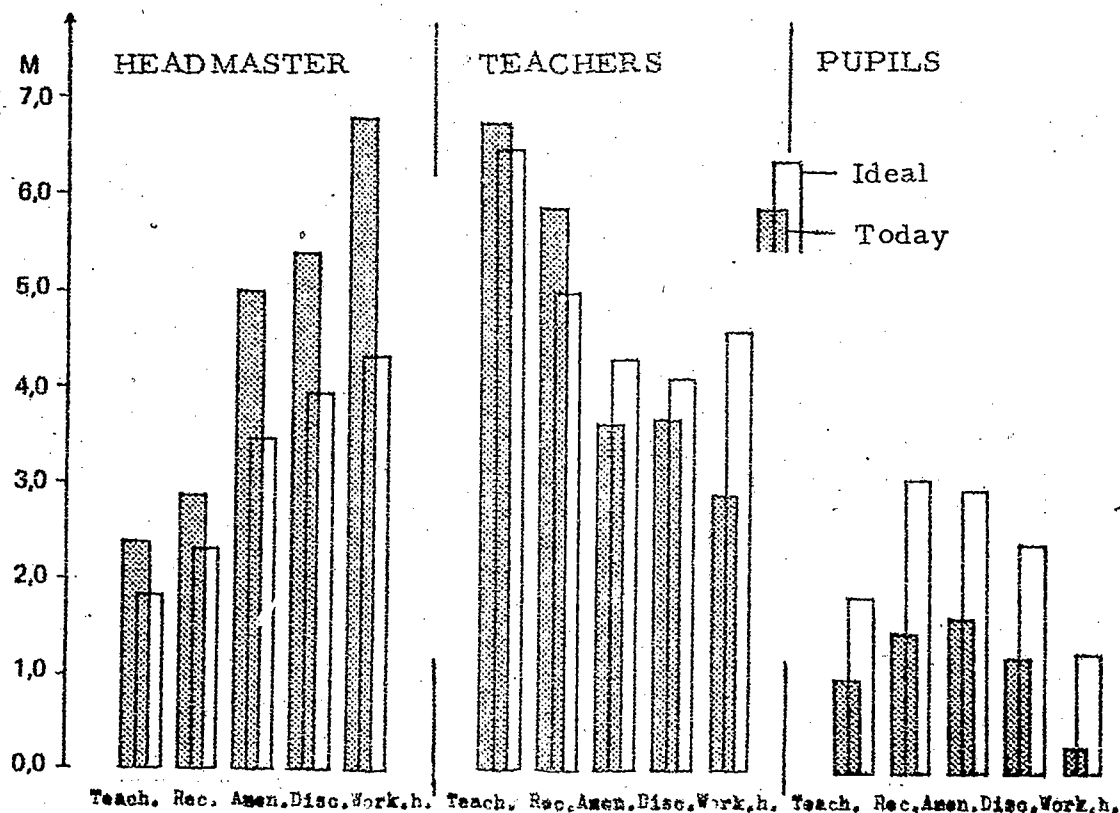
When asked about their opinion about the desired division of influence at the classroom level, the results show that no less than 67% of the teacher group consider that the student influence in the class is "satisfactory as it is", with regard both to planning and to decision-making. Considering the picture of the present situation that has emerged in the study, it can only be said that this complacency does not appear to be particularly justified in view of the goals expressed in the Swedish curricula of 1962 and 1969. Otherwise it is interesting to note that an equally large percentage of the teachers at Eira School consider that things are satisfactory as they are, despite the fact that they have a considerably higher level of student influence at their school. So there seems to be a tendency to think that things are all right as they are - irrespective of how they are - an acceptance of the existing situation and a resistance to change. Thus the teachers at Eira School who have had practical experience of democratic forms of work in the school have no desire to return to the old order. On the contrary, they are the only group that have consistently wished for a reduction in the influence of the teachers and increased student influence, so that in the ideal school the influence would largely be distributed evenly between the three categories, headmaster, teachers and students, "in order that everything should function as well as possible".

In general, there has emerged a wish in the study that the students should have more influence in the school. However, it has been considered appropriate that this should be brought about at the expense of the influence of the other category, while one's own category should continue with its influence undiminished. This tendency is shown clearly in a diagram

summarizing the opinions of the Teacher Group (cf. Figure 2).

The columns represent the means of the respondents' assessment, whereby the position figures mark the gradually increased percentage of influence. The position figure 2 thus marks 11-20%, the figure 5 41-50% etc. (See further Wetterström, 1972 a, p. 25 ff.)

Figure 2. The ideal decision-making situation compared to the situation today according to the Teacher Group



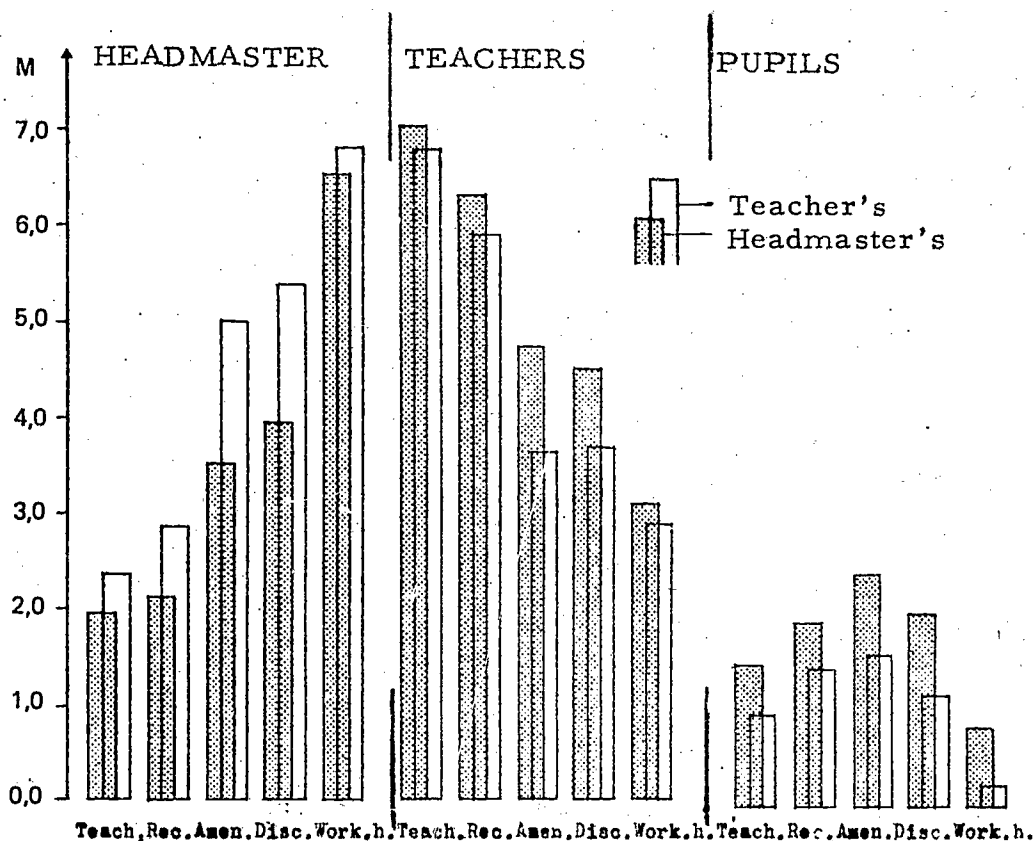
Teacher today on the left, teacher's ideal on the right of each double column.

According to the Teacher Group, the headmaster should have less influence in all areas - though the reduction should be in proportion to the amount of existing influence. They themselves should have some reduction in the areas where they feel that they have most influence (i. e. teaching and recreational questions), while in the other areas they should have more influence, above all in questions concerning working hours. They wish that the students should have more influence in all areas. Thus it can be said that the Teacher Group has outlined an ideal situation in which the headmaster has less influence, the students more and they themselves largely maintain their present position.

On the whole an amazing unanimity has emerged in the study as to how the influence should be divided within the school. This apparently harmonious picture is marred, however, by the conception of the present division of

influence. As an example of this, Figure 3 shows the opinions of the Teacher Group on this point compared to those of the Headmaster Group.

Figure 3. Division of influence in the school today
According to the Teacher Group compared to Headmasters



The headmasters' opinions on the left, the Teacher Group's on the right in each double column.

When comparing the answers from the Headmaster Group and the Teacher Group, we can see that the teachers have consistently assessed the influence of the headmaster as being greater than the Headmaster Group has. In the same way the Teacher Group has consistently stated that its influence is less. This is from a social psychological point of view an interesting and well-known phenomenon. The two main groups concerned both feel (have stated) that the influence of the other is greater than the group itself feels (has stated) it to be. Each group underestimates its own influence and/or overestimates that of the other group.

A further difference is that the teachers have said that the influence of the students is less in all areas than the headmasters have.

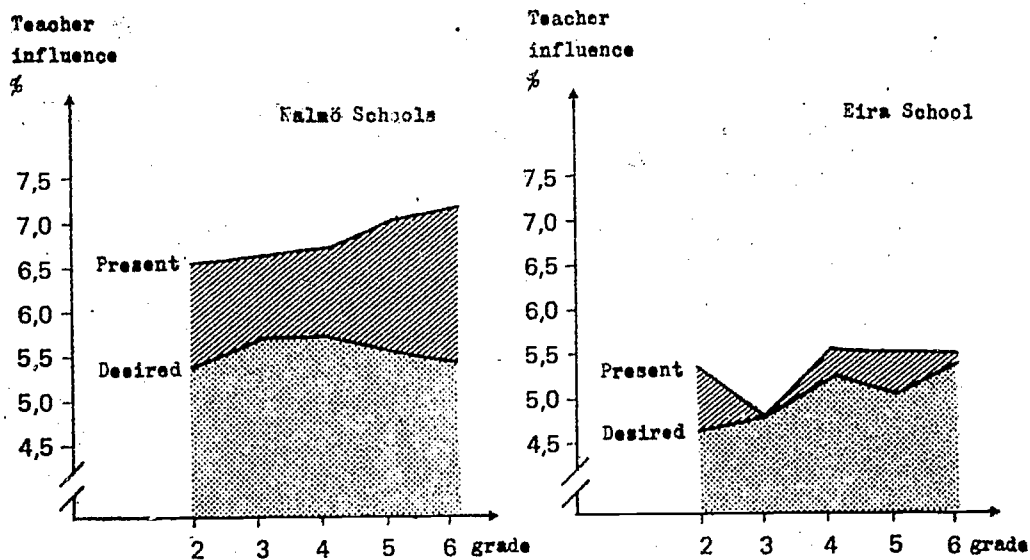
Thus it has proved that the degree of change needed to achieve the "ideal" state of affairs is experienced differently by the different groups in the study. All the groups questioned are agreed that a decrease and increase

are desirable in the influence of the headmasters and students respectively, but they disagree over the degree of change. As far as the influence of the teachers is concerned, opinions differ both as to the type of change and to the degree.

It has also proved that different groups disagree particularly in certain areas. There are above all two such areas for the Headmaster Group and the Teacher Group, namely questions involving the teaching and working hours. The category that today has the greatest influence in these questions, the headmasters with regard to working hours and the teachers with regard to teaching, want to retain this influence, while the other category considers that it is just there that they should have a specially large increase.

In the same way as headmasters and different teacher groups have been asked to state the present and desired division of influence in the individual school, various teacher and student groups have also been asked to assess the present and desired division of influence in the individual class. By giving the students a figure representing a circle divided into ten sections, it has also been possible to obtain an assessment from the students of the influence of teachers and students in percentages. These questions have been answered both by students in Malmö and by students from corresponding grades at Eira School in Stockholm. The following figure shows the mean distributions divided over the different grades.

Figure 4. Development of student answers through the grades in assessing the present and desired degree of teacher influence within the class. The Malmö schools on the left. Eira School on the right.



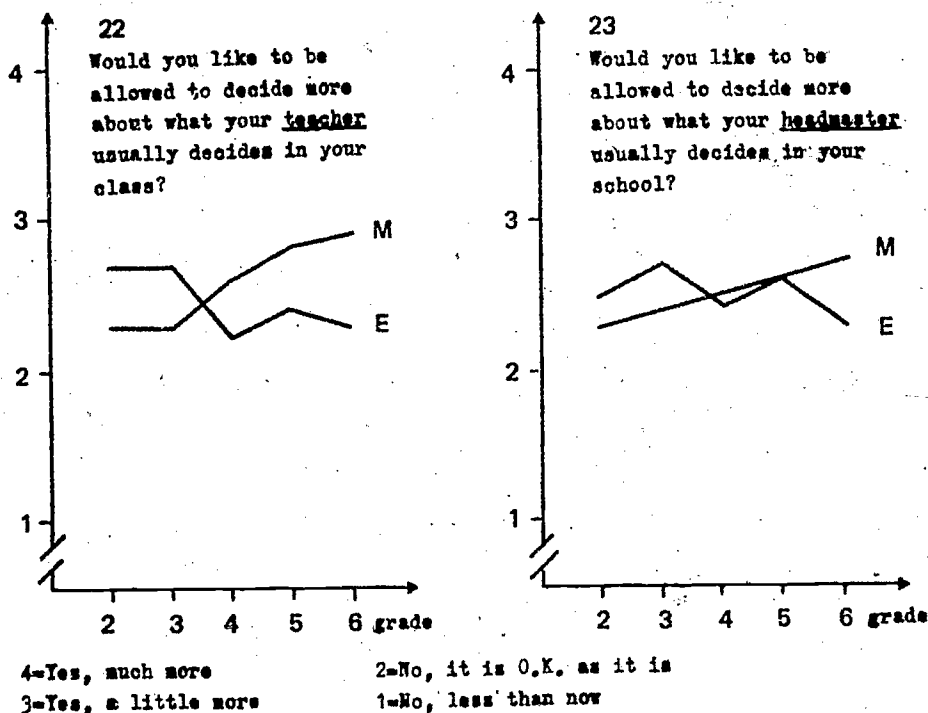
The figure reveals that the students at Eira School have assessed the degree of the teacher's influence as being considerably less than the Malmö students consider it to be. This result is substantiated by the information received from the teachers.

Further, it is shown that the students in the Malmö schools feel that the influence of the teacher increases in the higher grades. This development is not reflected in the data received from the students at Eira School.

In the higher grades at Eira School, the students give an increasing amount of teacher influence as being the ideal situation, but this should naturally be placed in relation to the stated degree of teacher influence. This development is not reflected in the answers received from the Malmö students.

If by discontent one means the difference between one's situation as it is and as one would like it to be the Malmö students can be said to show an increasing discontent with their school situation with rising age as also can be seen in the next figure.

Figure 5. Graphic description of the desire of the students for a change in the division of influence shown as an average per grade.



We can see that the higher the grade, the greater the discontent shown by the Malmö students, while the Eira students think to an increasing extent that "it's all right as it is". The difference between the student groups is statistically significant.

In summarizing, it can be said that our data provide evidence that the Eira School really had succeeded in becoming more democratic insofar as both teachers and students have stated - experienced a greater degree of student influence than the students at the Malmö schools. At the same time, the Eira students have expressed more satisfaction with their own amount of influence than the Malmö students, and can thereby be said to show a degree of saturation in this area. Students who have been allowed to make their own decisions and consequently have been given greater responsibility do not wish unreservedly to increase their own influence within the framework of the class. On the contrary, the stated ideal amount of teacher influence has increased in the higher grades, a circumstance which could be interpreted as revealing an increased insight into and appreciation of the work done by the teacher in the class.

Experiments have also been conducted in the investigation to study the connection between on the one hand a school democratic attitude and on the other certain background and individual variables. In this context it has proved rather unexpectedly that the number of years of service has shown no connection with the attitude to school democracy measured. On the other hand some personality variables studied more exploratively, such as Murray's need variables, tend to show co-variation with this attitude.

2.2 Some special studies

2.2.1 Student suggestions for school improvements

The purpose of one special study within the project has been to clarify what changes the students in grades 1-6 would like to make within the school and also to some extent to study whether these suggestions can be considered practical and realistic. During the spring term of 1969 all the classes in grades 3 through 6 at Munkhätte School in Malmö were asked to write a composition with the title: "If I could decide at school, I would change ...". Altogether 444 students took part. These compositions have been processed and the different suggestions for improvements have been counted and placed in categories. What is it then that the students would like to change in their school?

The suggestions (a total of 2891) have been placed in six main groups. The first group concerns mainly the external milieu and then usually the school as a whole, while only a small proportion of the suggestions refer to the student's own classroom setting. In this group we find 36% of the suggestions received. The second group involves questions concerning the teaching and subjects. 20% of the suggestions are to be found here. Group 3 concerns working hours and Group 4 questions involving discipline and rules. These occupy 13% and 12% of the suggestions respectively. Group 5 can be called entertainment and recreation. This group has only 4% of the suggestions. Finally Group 6 has 5% of the suggestions and mainly concerns relations with different persons within the school.

Thus the incomparably largest number of the suggestions for improvement concern the milieu, while the smallest number concern entertainment and recreation.

It proved that on the whole the different grades all wanted to make the same changes. The suggestions made in grade 3 recurred in grade 6 and vice versa.

Is then this list of suggestions very special for the school studied? In order to answer this question, material has also been processed from a similar (although not identical) study carried out in cooperation with the Parent-Teacher Association at another school. When the wishes expressed by the students at the two schools were compared, the two lists were found to be very similar. The relations between the six main groups found earlier therefore seem to be of a more general nature.

As far as the study made at Munkhätte School is concerned, an attempt has been made to assess each suggestion made by the students according to the criterion "realistic" - "unrealistic". The principle for the assessment has above all been whether the suggestion can be put into practice.

Suggestions that have been considered "unrealistic" have been of the type:

1. an ill-considered wish with no regard to the consequences, e.g. throwing snowballs as much as one likes, one period of naughtiness every week etc.
2. suggestions without any proposed compensation e.g. longer breaks, longer holidays
3. suggestions that are normally considered too far-reaching, e.g. a swimming-pool in the playground.

The final figures for each grade show that the proportion of "unrealistic" suggestions is surprisingly constant for the different grades (about 40%), despite the rise in age. It is not until grade 6 that there is a slight indication of a reduction. A similar picture appears if we study the number of unrealistic suggestions made on an average per student.

No great differences can therefore be said to have emerged in this study between grades 3, 4, 5, and 6, either with regard to the type of suggestion or to the degree of practicability of the suggestions. Thus in this respect there are not really any marked differences in prerequisites. The number of suggestions for improvements within the school has proved to increase in the higher grades, however.

2.2.2 Students' Council activities extended to grades 1-6

As part of the investigation an attempt has been made to follow up without intervention an experiment with the extension of Students' Council activities to grades 1-6 that was initiated by a representative of SECO (the Swedish Union of Secondary-School Students). The experiment was carried out at a relatively new school in a residential area in Malmö during the school year 1969-70. Thanks to the cooperation of the school principals, it was possible to study the development of this attempt at democratization without adult

intervention. In this way it has also been possible to shed some light on the course of events when the students themselves have had to take the consequences of their actions and the reflections this has given rise to among those participating.

The extended Students' Council activities were intended to be based on individual membership, and for each 10 students in a class one representative was to be elected to the Council which, in its turn, would then elect one representative for each of grades 2-8 to the Committee. To spread information about SECO and the Students' Council activities, representatives of SECO were to hold an information and recruiting campaign for two weeks in December. Subsequently elections would be held.

For the evaluation of the experimentation, questionnaires on the attitude to and knowledge of SECO and the Students' Council activities were sent out on three occasions to all the teachers and to two randomly sampled classes for each of the grades 2-8. The three occasions were just before and just after the information campaign and then when the new Students' Council had been active for six months, on which occasion the students on the Committee of the Students' Council were also interviewed.

After the information and recruiting campaign as mentioned above and the election of representatives to the Council and Committee, however, the following occurred. The work of the Committee was overthrown after some time by the representatives of grades 7 and 8, who decided not to join SECO and to abandon the clauses stipulating that the lower grades should also participate. An interim committee was formed instead, consisting of four self-elected students from the upper level of the school and this then functioned for the remainder of the term without the help of the SECO representative. Thus the third testing occasion came to evaluate an "unsuccessful" attempt at democratization from the point of view of the original intentions.

Some examples of the observations made will be given here:

1. a The students knew very little about the forms of cooperation that exist within the school.
 - b This lack of knowledge could be corrected by information campaign arranged by the students themselves.
2. a The majority of the students considered that grades 4-6 should participate in Students' Council activities, while opinions were divided as far as grades 1-3 were concerned.
 - b The students' opinions on this question showed a certain degree of differentiation, since, for example, questions concerning justice and efficiency produced partly different answers.

3. The majority of the students thought that the activities of the Students' Council could have a beneficial effect on the atmosphere in the school and that they could bring about an improvement in the cooperation both between the students themselves and between teachers and students.
4. The majority of the students considered that the Students' Council could look after the interests of the students in the areas taken up in this study, namely the playground, the eating facilities and the school regulations.
5. Differences that can be directly linked with age level could only be established with regard to knowledge of Students' Council activities and the attitude towards the participation of the lower grades.
6. No differences between the sexes could be established as far as knowledge of Students' Council activities is concerned. Some differences emerged, however, on a few of the attitude questions. The boys emphasized more strongly than the girls that they wanted to take part in decisions.
7. The teachers had a fairly neutral attitude towards the Students' Council activities and were not particularly convinced of its positive effect in training the students.
8. The teachers pursued a neutral wait-and-see policy towards the proposed Students' Council activities, but thought they were worth trying. The fact that the activities did not turn out as planned could be noticed most in the reactions of the teachers, who by the third testing occasion had adopted more negative attitudes towards the Students' Council.

The Swedish curriculum points out that great care should be taken successively to introduce the lower and intermediate levels into the Students' Council (Lgr 69, p.30). The results of the experiment evaluated here seem to underline this. The original good intentions proved to be far too burdensome for the untrained students to fulfil, and the result was a Students' Council of the more traditional type, with little contact with the great mass of students. It should be noted, however, that this form of activity was not satisfying for those involved either. The question is whether a democratization experiment can ever be expected to produce a better result than the experience that one of the students interviewed expressed thus: "We should have more cooperation with the teachers. Conditions and discipline would be better then. We should have more responsibility for each other. So that we can understand each other. That is what the Students' Council is for."

The question is whether it is not of great educational importance that the students should be permitted to experience for themselves the difficulties involved in cooperation within the school and at the same time the need for

such cooperation, without being too much steered by the opinions and experiences of adults. There is a clear need for teachers and school principals to go in actively for training the students to be able to share the influence and responsibility. It is questionable, however, whether conscientiousness and involvement should mean continual "guidance" or a certain measure of "abstention from guidance". Further research needs to be made of the best ways of training students in sharing the responsibility.

3. SUMMARY

If one of the goals of the school is to strive for more democratic forms of work, one of the first steps to be taken must surely be to map the attitudes of the parties concerned to school democracy and the way in which they experience the decision procedures that exist today. A natural second step then becomes to investigate to what extent and in which areas people wish to change the decision procedures and whether the categories involved are agreed on what they wish to change.

Thus we had reason to study both the present situation and the desired "ideal" conditions in the school. The parties mostly directly concerned in these questions have been considered to be the three categories, headmasters, teachers and students. Decisions taken within a school unit usually involve both matters that are common to the entire school unit and matters that concern the individual class. When trying by means of questionnaires to build up a picture of these conditions, the actual questions can be worded in different ways to cover different aspects of the impression; they can, for example, vary along a general-specific dimension. By questions on a general level is meant questions on more comprehensive areas, questions that have been assumed to measure a more general attitude, while questions on a specific level refer to clearly defined, concrete situations.

In the part of the project concerning grades 1-6, the various investigations carried out have taken up and tried to illuminate the questions shown in Figure 6. (The different notations used in the figure are explained beneath.)

Figure 6. Diagram showing the design of the investigations carried out in the grades 1-6 section of the Student democracy project

Present division of influence

	Level		Level		Level	
	Concrete	Abstract	Concrete	Abstract	Concrete	Abstract
Classroom		*(a, c)	*(b)	*(a, c)	*(e)	*(e)
School		*(a, c)		*(a, c)		
	Respondents Headmasters		Respondents Teachers		Respondents Pupils	

Desired (ideal) division of influence

	Level	Level	Level
	Concrete	Abstract	Concrete Abstract
Classroom		*(a, c)	*(e)
School		*(a, c)	*(d) *(e)
	Respondents Headmasters	Respondents Teachers	Respondents Pupils

*denotes that the question has been taken up. The letters in parenthesis refer to the report in which the results have been presented.

The following reports have been published:

- a. Wetterström, M. Skoldemokrati på låg- och mellanstadiet. Olika berörda grupperns syn på medinflytandeproblematiken i skolan. /School democracy in grades 1-6: The views of different groups concerned on the problems of co-influence in the school./ Pedagogisk-psykologiska problem, No. 171, 1972. (a) - The report contains an account of answers received from a questionnaire study in which headmasters, supervisory teachers, teachers and student teachers in Malmö, and teachers at Eira School in Stockholm express their opinions on co-influence in the school. They describe the way in which they experience the division of influence today within the school and class, together with the way in which they think the influence should be divided in the future school system, school and class. Further, they give their views on the ideal headmaster, teacher and student, their choice of working form for school democracy and choice of leader type. There is a relatively unanimous body of opinion that the students should be given more influence. Both headmasters and teachers consider, however, that this should be done at the expense of the other category's influence, not their own. All groups are relatively agreed about the ideal distribution of influence in the school as a whole, but their estimation of the present distribution varies (with a tendency to over-estimate the influence of other categories). The teachers at Eira School in Stockholm report a considerably more even distribution of influence between headmaster, teachers and students (with greater student influence and less influence for the headmaster and teachers) than the other groups. The proportion of teachers who do not want to increase the students' influence in the classroom is, however, the same at Eira School as in the general teacher group, which suggests that there is a resistance to change that is partly unrelated to the actual distribution of influence.
- b. Wetterström, M. Skoldemokrati på låg- och mellanstadiet: Några lärargrupperns syn på beslutsfattandet i en rad specifika klassrumssituationer. /School democracy in grades 1-6: The views of some teacher groups on decision-making in a number of specific classroom situations./ Pedagogisk-psykologiska problem, No. 172, 1972. (b) - The report contains an account of answers received to a questionnaire, in which a "normal" group of teachers from a demonstration and experimental school, and teachers from Eira School in Stockholm express their opinions on the actual influence

students have in a number of concrete classroom situations. The recommendations made in the curriculum are presented side by side with the teachers' opinions on possible negative consequences of an increase in student influence in the situations in question.

- In general the teachers themselves make most of the decisions within the class. Systematic differences emerge between the groups, however, corresponding to the expected average position of the different groups on a "progressiveness" continuum. Thus the teachers at Eira School have reported a greater degree of student influence than the other two groups. Despite these differences in the degree of actual student influence, a definite pattern appeared among the situations used, so that in all the groups studied these situations are ranked in the same way (from situations in which the students have a greater degree of influence on the decisions to situations in which the teacher usually makes the decisions alone). There is reason to suppose that this grouping of situations provides a suitable basis for a gradual development of the students' ability to make relevant decisions themselves.

- c. Wetterström, M. Skoldemokrati på låg- och mellanstadiet: Analys och diskussion. / School democracy in grades 1-6: Analysis and discussion. / Pedagogisk-psykologiska problem, No. 177, 1972. (c) - The report contains statistical analysis and discussion of data received from questionnaire studies, in which headmasters, supervisory teachers, teachers and student teachers in Malmö, and teachers at Eira School in Stockholm express their views on the problems involved in co-influence in school and classroom. Working from a number of initial hypotheses, a factor analytical treatment of the answers from the teacher group is described, together with an analysis of variance treatment of the answers from all the groups in the study. The answers from the teacher group are further compared to background data, and the answers from the student teacher group are compared to results from a battery of personality tests.
- d. Wetterström, M. Elevrådsverksamhet utvidgad till låg- och mellanstadiet: Uppföljning av ett SECO-initiativ. / Extension of student council activities to grades 1-6: Following up an initiative taken by the Swedish Union of Secondary-School Students. / Pedagogisk-psykologiska problem, No. 212, 1973. - The report presents an explorative evaluation of experimentation in extending the activities of the Students' Council to include not only the upper level of the comprehensive school (grades 7-9), but also grades 1-6. These activities were only guided in the initial stage and were then followed up without intervention. The results show that in the beginning students on all school levels knew very little about the existing participatory bodies within the school, but at the same had a degree of faith in the opportunities of the Students' Council to safeguard the interests of the students that was out of proportion to the actual situation. The results reveal some of the difficulties that this kind of experiment in democratization has to contend with i. e. the balancing act that must be maintained between on the one hand the students' need of adult support and on the other the benefit to the students of making their own mistakes.

e. Wetterström, M. Skoldemokrati på låg- och mellanstadiet: Elevåsikter. /School democracy in grades 1-6: Student opinions./ Pedagogisk-psykologiska problem, No. 241, 1974. - The report gives an account of a series of investigations made in grades 1-6 in order to illuminate the attitudes of the students towards participation in decision-making in the school. Among the results presented are suggestions made by the students for improving the school, the assessments by different student groups of their present and desired degree of influence, comparisons between the opinions of students and teachers on these issues, and the development within this area over a two-year period. A more general discussion of the problems of co-influence is also included. Various statements made by the students suggest that the decision situations studied can be graded according to the criterion, "accessibility for decentralized decision-making". It should be possible to make this grading one of the bases for planning regular training in democratic decision-making at these school levels (cf. Pedagogisk-psykologiska problem, No. 172). As was expected, the students at Eira School have consistently stated that they have more actual influence than the Malmö students claim to have; however, they give only a very slight increase in their influence as being the ideal situation, which suggests the existence of a "saturation point". Comparisons over the years 1969-71 indicate that no development worth mentioning has taken place with regard to student influence in the classroom during this period.

4. REFERENCES

Aktuellt från Skolöverstyrelsen. /Bulletin from the Swedish Board of Education. /, 1968/69, 22(5).

Charters, Jr., W.W. The social background of teaching. In: Gage, N.L. (Ed.) Handbook of research in teaching. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963. Pp. 715-815.

Etzioni, A. Moderna organisationer. /Modern organizations. / Stockholm: Bonniers, 1966.

Lgr 69. Läroplan för grundskolan, allmän del. /The 1969 curriculum for the Swedish comprehensive school. General part. / Stockholm: Utbildningsförlaget, 1969.

Likert, R. The human organization: Its management and value. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967.

Ross, A. Varför demokrati? /Why democracy? / Stockholm: Tidens förlag, 1968.

Sisk. Slutrapport från Utredningsgruppen för samverkan i skolan. /Final report from the Group on Cooperation in School. / Stockholm: Skolöverstyrelsen, 1971.

Thorsrud, E. & Emery, F.E. Medinflytande och engagemang i arbetet. /Co-influence and involvement in work. / Stockholm: SAF:s förlagssektion, 1969.

Wetterström, M. Skoldemokrati på låg- och mellanstadiet: Olika berörda gruppers syn på medinflytandeproblematiken i skolan. /School democracy in grades 1-6: The views of different groups concerned on the problems of co-influence in the school. / Pedagogisk-psykologiska problem, Nr 171, 1972. (a)

Wetterström, M. Skoldemokrati på låg- och mellanstadiet: Några lärargruppers syn på beslutsfattandet i en rad specifika klassrumssituationer. /School democracy in grades 1-6: The views of some teacher groups on decision-making in a number of specific classroom situations. / Pedagogisk-psykologiska problem, Nr 172, 1972. (b)

Wetterström, M. Skoldemokrati på låg- och mellanstadiet: Analys och diskussion. /School democracy in grades 1-6: Analysis and discussion. / Pedagogisk-psykologiska problem, Nr 177, 1972. (c)

Wetterström, M. Elevrådsverksamhet utvidgad till låg- och mellanstadiet: Uppföljning av ett SÉCO-initiativ. /Extension of student council activities to grades 1-6: Following up an initiative taken by the Swedish Union of Secondary-School Students. / Pedagogisk-psykologiska problem, Nr 212, 1973.

Wetterström, M. Skoldemokrati på låg- och mellanstadiet: Elevåsikter. /School democracy in grades 1-6: Student opinions. / Pedagogisk-psykologiska problem, Nr 241, 1974.

Abstract card

Wetterström, M. Student democracy in grades 1-6. Educational and Psychological Interactions (Malmö, Sweden: School of Education), No. 46, 1974.

After a short introductory discussion, results are presented from a series of mapping studies in which headmasters, supervisory teachers, student teachers and different teacher and student groups have expressed their views on co-influence in the school - how they experience the situation today and how they would like the influence to be divided in the future. Assessments are reported from teachers and students both at ordinary schools and at more progressive schools. - The results indicate a generally positive attitude towards increased student influence, but also reveal several specific problems that emerge when this attitude is expressed in more concrete terms. /In Swedish./

Indexed:

1. Democratic values
2. Student participation
3. Social attitudes

Reference card

Wetterström, M. Student democracy in grades 1-6. Educational and Psychological Interactions (Malmö, Sweden: School of Education), No. 46, 1974.