

Local Education Policies

Also by Christine Hudson

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SKOLA I FÖRÄNDRING (Schooling in Transition) *(with Christine Hudson)*

Local Education Policies

Comparing Sweden and Britain

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*To Kathleen and Ingrid, mothers and educationalists,
and Anton and Stefan, sons and pupils*

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Preface

In the Western world, education policy has increasingly become a local matter. Localities and schools construct their own systems, develop their own particular profiles and adjust the content of education to meet specific local needs. Even if economic, political and cultural globalization, and the increasing emphasis on knowledge in society have, to some extent, contributed to a streamlining of education across different countries, these tendencies have also promoted fragmentation, diversity and the development of specific local features in education.

These changes require a new understanding of education policy. The national education system is only a part of the context in which local education policies are created. The ideas and preferences of local policy makers need to be explored. The relationship between education on the one hand and local economic, political, social and demographic conditions on the other, has to be examined. However, local education must also be investigated against the background of wider global and transnational changes.

At present there is a gap in the literature concerning the ways in which education is created in the intersection between the global and the local. Our edited volume tries to go some way towards filling this gap. The book brings together a collection of papers, which analyse different aspects of local education policy-making. In order to establish a broader base for our conclusions, a comparative perspective is used. Scholars from Great Britain and Sweden investigate various aspects of these policies in the two countries. We hope that the book will provide new knowledge and additional insights into the conditions of local education policies.

The book is the result of a research project, which developed in two phases. It started as a pilot study of consequences of the decentralization reforms in Swedish primary and secondary education during the beginning of the 1990s. This was published in Swedish, in our common book *Skola i förändring* (Schooling in Transition). On the basis of this, we applied for, and received, a research grant from the Swedish National Agency for Education (project no. 15001).

Parts of our studies have also been supported through the national Political Science Research Programme 'Democracy in Transition', financed by HSFR, the Swedish Social Sciences Research Council. Individual chapters in the book have been financed by separate sources. We are grateful to the National Agency for Education and the HSFR, for making this research possible.

Three of the chapters in this volume have previously been published by academic journals. Chapter 3 appeared in *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 22 (2), 1999; Chapter 4 is a revised and extended version of an article published in the *Oxford Review of Education*, 24 (4), 1998; and Chapter 5 was originally published in Swedish as 'Utbildning och kommunal utvecklingspolitik', in *Kommunal Ekonomi och Politik*, vol. 2 (2), 1998. We acknowledge that the publishers of these journals have kindly accepted that the articles are also published in this book. We also express our gratitude to the Open University Press, which has agreed to the reproduction of Table 2.1 in this book.

Valuable comments concerning the different contributions in this volume have been received from a number of sources. In particular, we would like to express our thanks to fellow researchers, at the Department of Political Science, engaged in education policy studies whose active discussion of our work has provided a welcome stimulus. We also acknowledge the helpful comments and suggestions from colleagues at the Centre for Principal Development at Umeå University, Sweden.

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