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REVIEW OF EDUCATION POLICY IN SWEDEN

EXAMINERS' REPORT AND QUESTIONS

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1. The review of education policy in Sweden will take place on 20 October 1992 on the occasion of the 49th Session of the Education Committee. The attached document contains the Examiners' Report and the questions upon which the discussion will be based. The last section of the report (pp. 56-60) also serves as a summary of its contents.

2. The Background Report, drafted by the Swedish authorities, has been sent to members of the Education Committee.

3. The examiners responsible for this study are:

Mr. R. ELMORE	Harvard University, Cambridge (United States)
Mr. U. TEICHLER	University of Kassel (Germany)
Mr. G.S. PAPADOPOULOS (Rapporteur)	Former Deputy Director for Education, Directorate for Education, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, (OECD)

4. The Education Committee is invited to recommend that this document be released for publication under the responsibility of the Secretary-General.

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INTRODUCTION

1. This is the third time, during the last twenty-five years, that education in Sweden is being examined within the OECD under the procedures established by the Education Committee for the Reviews of National Policies for Education. (The first Review took place in 1967 and the second in 1979). We wish at the outset to pay tribute to the willingness shown by successive Swedish governments to share their experience with that of other advanced industrialised countries; and to do this in a spirit of openness to outside critique, in a sector which they consider vital to the shaping of Swedish society, nourished by strong democratic values, and to the health of the country's economy. We feel honoured in having been invited to contribute to this process.

2. Over the years, Sweden has established a reputation of being at the forefront of educational policy thinking and in relating the development of its education to the country's broader political, social and economic context. Compared to the two previous Reviews, the *context* within which the present Review takes place has considerably changed. While the commitment to education in a democratic and egalitarian society remains firm, there is now a new questioning about the methods and means of achieving this objective, accompanied by greater awareness of the complexities and uncertainties that surround the change process in education. This has been compounded by the recent changes which have occurred on the Swedish political scene, marked by the advent of the Conservative-led coalition government. The new government has brought with it a set of declared policy objectives and a new political discourse which, at least to the outsider, seem to represent a reversal of some of the fundamental precepts which have guided the development of Swedish education, and of Swedish society more broadly, during the long dominance of the Social Democrats. It would be unrealistic to ignore this political change in any discussion of educational policy in Sweden at this time.

3. Equally important changes have been taking place in the international position of Sweden, economic as well as political, which will have significant effects on the destiny of its people. New challenges arise for education as the country moves away from its traditional neutrality and seeks its way towards integration into the European Community and to adjusting its role to the new Europe consequent on the demise of communism. Finally, and as in so many other industrialised countries, the economic climate has changed. The Swedish export-based economy has not been spared the effects of international economic stagnation, nor Swedish industry the need of restructuring. Productivity growth has stagnated and unemployment has risen to levels which, though still relatively low by international standards, are unprecedented in the Swedish context. So much so that serious concerns have begun to emerge about the economy's capacity to maintain its competitiveness in the world markets and to generate the resources necessary to sustain the large public

sector spending on which the cherished "Swedish model" of social consensus, full employment and the Welfare Society has traditionally leaned.

4. This changed context, with its impact on current educational policy and thinking -- and even more so on actual educational practice at all levels of the system -- was constantly present throughout our discussions during our two-week visit to Sweden. We wish to express our appreciation to our Swedish hosts for the effective arrangements which they made for our visit, which enabled us to get first-hand experience of a representative sample of Swedish schools, universities and adult education programmes. We were also able to have open and frank discussions with a wide range of political leaders, professional and other interest groups, including the research community, local authority representatives, educational administrators and heads of schools, colleges and universities. We were impressed by the capacity shown by our interlocutors, at all levels, for informed debate on complex issues of educational policy and practice, their dedication to their tasks, and above all the relaxed way with which they confronted the uncertainties of the future in matters that are vital to their professional lives. But we were also impressed by the distance which we often observed to exist between policy pronouncements at central government level and the perceptions, at local and operational levels, of the expected consequences of these pronouncements, giving rise to the uncertainties to which we have just referred and to a great deal of speculation about the real intentions of government. We return to this question later in our report.

5. Our report has been largely influenced by our direct observations during our visit. Each one of us, of course, had prior knowledge of the educational situation in Sweden and we also had at our disposal an impressive volume of documentation on various aspects of this situation and its historical evolution. Much of this material derived from studies produced by OECD as part of the very active participation of Sweden in the educational programmes of the Organisation over the years. Sweden itself has invested very heavily in analytical studies of its education, in line with the equally heavy investment which it has made in the development and reform of its educational system. Educational R & D in Sweden has been a flourishing enterprise and probably no other comparable country can match the volume and sophistication of this output.

6. It is humanly impossible to assimilate all this material and we were, therefore, particularly grateful to the Swedish authorities for the overview they provided in their succinct background report -- *The Swedish Way Towards a Learning Society* -- and its accompanying thematic papers specifically prepared for the purposes of this Review. It has greatly facilitated our task and we regard it as an essential complement to our own report. It has, mercifully, enabled us to avoid repeating lengthy descriptions and factual accounts of education in Sweden and to concentrate rather on selective policy questions which seem to us to call for critical comment and discussion. We strongly commend the Background Report to the reader, particularly its last chapter -- "Heading for the Future" -- which deals with the changes in policy introduced by the present government.

7. Thus, our own report, though its coverage is very broad, encompassing the whole system of education, is by no means a comprehensive discussion of all the problems which confront the educational system in Sweden at the present

time. We have purposefully avoided discussion of well-established features of the structure and articulation of the system, such as the dominant role of the all-through comprehensive system, which is not contested. Our attention has rather concentrated on how the functioning of the system, at its various levels, could be affected by politically motivated changes -- e.g., the new accent on competition, choice and the role of private schools -- changes in its governance and shifts in curriculum and pedagogic objectives, including their implications for performance assessment. In this, and in line with the wishes of the Swedish authorities, we have given particular attention to the higher education sector. We have organised our discussion under three main areas: the impact of changes in educational policy making; the effect of these changes on schools and related questions in the provision of adult education; problems confronting the future development of higher education. In each of these areas we endeavour to identify strategic issues which arise from the continuum of earlier developments projected into the possible consequences of the policy changes which are now under way. A concluding section winds up our discussion by posing a number of questions to facilitate debate on these issues, and which also serve as a brief summary of the contents of this report.

8. One final comment needs to be added, in explanation of the nature of our report. Our visit to Sweden took place at a time when government policy was still in the making. Decisions on many important issues had yet to be finalised, even in the form of governmental proposals to Parliament. This is true, for example, for such matters as municipal funding, private schools, evaluation and pupil marking. It is also true for the major reform of higher education on which the public debate, based on the government's memorandum issued in January 1992, was still at a relatively early stage. This makes it all the more difficult to comment on actual policy. In many of these matters, however, the intentions of government are clearly perceptible and this has led us to direct attention to the possible consequences of these intentions by reference to significant policy issues affecting the development of Swedish education. In this sense, we would like to hope that our report can be seen as making a contribution to the on-going educational policy debate in Sweden.

I. CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN EDUCATIONAL POLICY

9. In this section, we take up two broad questions which, in our view, call for discussion and clarification if the more specific issues raised in the following two sections are to be properly understood. Both questions are of an essentially political nature and this is quite in line with the growing politicisation of the educational debate in Sweden. They deal, respectively, with the contents and objectives of educational policy, and with the mechanisms, instruments and processes of educational policy making. The two, of course, are inter-related and often fuse into each other, and no attempt will be made in the presentation below to establish artificial boundaries between them.

The inherited tradition

10. By any standards, Sweden is a well-educated society and its educational achievements are internationally recognised. The level of this achievement, and the multiple channels by which education and learning permeate Swedish society, are well-documented in the Background Report. Only some of the more salient features of what has come to be known as the Swedish "tradition" in education will be recapitulated here because of their relevance to our discussion.

11. There is, to start with, the country's strong commitment to education as a public service, publicly financed. This is expressed by high public expenditures for education and is reflected in lavishly equipped and well-staffed schools. It is a commitment to education in its own right, valued primarily for raising the cultural level of the population and for having a well-informed citizenry essential to the functioning of a democratic society. Equally strong have been the egalitarian objectives of this tradition, demonstrated by the progress made in the reduction of educational disparities -- between the sexes and generations, and among geographical regions and social classes -- and in the integration into mainstream schooling of immigrants' children and those with disabilities.

12. Linked to these social objectives has been the explicit use of education, in conjunction with labour market training, as part of a co-ordinated package of active manpower measures, which have sustained the full employment policy. A strong emphasis on adult education, in the context of recurrent education and life-long learning, has thus been amongst the most well-known features of the Swedish educational tradition, at both school and university levels, in combination with a variety of special programmes. So has the pronounced vocational/professional orientation of higher education programmes consequent on the recommendations of the U68 Commission, as has the high degree of comprehensiveness applied to the school system and the unitary principle applied to university-level planning and organisation.

13. The characteristics outlined above were consolidated during the far-reaching educational reforms of the sixties and seventies. They have to be seen against the background of the principles which then prevailed in educational planning and policy-making, the other side of the Swedish tradition. As stated in the Background Report, "the Swedish way of planning and developing public activities traditionally has been a "top-down" model. Central agencies have been responsible for the implementation of national political decisions. And these decisions have been prepared in a national context, where often basic analyses have been made by governmental commissions with varying degrees of participation by trade unions and the other interest organisations concerned". Education was thus part of central planning to be co-ordinated as far as possible with other sectors of policy. Its objectives were set through the political process at national level, often after protracted periods of consensus and expertise-building, with fairly detailed regulations to govern their implementation under local responsibility.

14. State authorities had a central role in steering the system, e.g. through national budget allocations, and in exercising co-ordination, supervisory and developmental functions, such as those performed by the National Board of Education and the National Board of Universities and Colleges. Centralised as the system undoubtedly was, it did make a distinction between the political act of overall policy setting, in the hands of a small Ministry of Education, and the location of responsibility for the implementation of policy within administrative, professionally-led infrastructures, represented by the two Boards, over which the Ministry had no direct control. This central authority diarchy still left considerable scope for managerial decisions at municipality and institutional levels, but always within a system of centrally prescribed objectives and regulations. The accent was on uniformity as the guarantor of maintaining equal standards.

Shifts in policy : decentralisation

15. These arrangements worked well during a long period of social and political consensus, uninterrupted productivity growth and relatively few restraints on public spending. But by the mid-seventies, as faith in central planning began to waver and political consensus to disappear, there were clear signs of the need for change, towards a redefinition of the relationships between the centre and the periphery and between politicians and professionals. This led to a move towards greater devolution of authority to the communities and more freedom for educational institutions to handle their own affairs, administrative, financial and the organisation of courses. This mood, which was partly reflected in the 1977 higher education legislation, was already captured in the 1979 Educational Policy Review of Sweden (*Educational Reforms in Sweden*, pp 62 ff.) and its subsequent development is recorded in the Background Report (Chapter 2.1). It began as a gradual, often imperceptible move, which, without at first touching the established power structures, gained momentum, and growing political recognition, throughout the eighties. It culminated in the radical reforms initiated in the last years of the previous government -- in particular the abolition of the National Board of Education, the transfer of block grants to municipalities and the restructuring of upper secondary education -- and vigorously pursued by the present government, thus formally consecrating the principle of decentralisation and its operation in practice. That this major departure from the established tradition of strong

central direction and control over education has been generally welcomed across all segments of the population, including the educational establishment itself -- even though not without evident worries in certain quarters about possible undesirable consequences -- is a measure of the timeliness of such a change.

16. Simply stated, the essential features of this change reside in the upgrading of the decision-making roles of the communities, of institutional leaders and of the clients of education. They are specifically reflected in: a) the increased powers given to the municipalities, within their block budgetary allocations, to run their schools, including responsibility for negotiating and setting teacher salaries, and to develop their own management models for this; b) the increased administrative, managerial and financial responsibilities which have devolved on individual schools and institutions of higher education; c) the new emphasis on differentiation between schools, between higher education institutions and between course programmes. How all this will work out in practice, and what turbulence it might create in the functioning of the system, is as yet too early to see. Certainly the general acceptability of the *general directions* of change, including an element of calculated ambiguity built into their consequences, reinforces confidence in their success. But this does not mean that the government can expect a similar degree of public equanimity when it comes to the implementation process; all the more so, as there is already evidence of differences within the coalition parties on specific measures in the application of these general directions of policy. Specific problems which could arise are discussed in the following sections of our report.

17. Our concern here is with policy impact of these changes. The devolution of responsibility and decision-making to local levels, including their empowerment, within certain national safeguards, to define their own needs and the ways and means by which these needs will be met, implies the acceptance by central government of a degree of purposeful agnosticism as to both the directions and outcomes of policy. This is entirely new in the ethos of Swedish policy-making. It reflects a fundamental faith in the maturity of a well-educated society and confidence in its ability to exercise its devolved responsibilities in ways which reconcile local needs and interests to national requirements. But it also brings into prominence a new role for the State in setting the broad national framework within which this freedom will be exercised, in ensuring equality of provision across the country and the maintenance of quality and standards. Monitoring and evaluation against centrally set targets thus replace steering and supervision as the main attributes of the Ministry and State Agencies. This is already reflected in the disbanding of the National Board of Education -- replaced by the new National Agency for Education -- and of the National Board of Universities and Colleges -- replaced by two separate units to perform essential service and evaluation tasks respectively.

New policy concepts, objectives and priorities

18. Decentralisation thus poses a series of new problems for policy-making and Swedish experience in this will be followed with interest by other countries. In the Swedish context, these problems need to be discussed in relation to the declared objectives of the present government, and their ideological underpinnings, as expounded in Chapter 3 of the Background Report.

which also indicates the specific areas of policy reorientation. We stress again, and Government admits this freely, that neither the intended, and much less so, the unintended consequences of the changes that have been set in motion are as yet clearly discernible. The prevailing attitude is one of pragmatism: encourage changes in certain directions so as to infuse a new dynamism into the system, while ensuring that the forces thereby released do not get out of control. As graphically put to us by one of our political interlocutors, we lay down the floor, but are not concerned how the space up to the ceiling will be built up! In other words, there need by no contradiction between central target-setting and open goals, provided the latter are kept within limits. The question, of course, remains by whom and how these limits are set.

19. It is within this context that the consequences of the application of the guiding principles of the new policy have to be considered. As stated in the Background Report, the two fundamental ambitions of the new government are to develop further the principle of freedom of institutions and of choice for individuals and the strengthening of the quality of Swedish education with special regard to the new international context. We quote from the Report:

> In the opinion of the government there is a close connection between these two ambitions. Freedom from central regulations not only gives institutions the best conditions for developing education of high quality and for advancing the frontiers of knowledge, but also for creating a pluralistic society based upon and supporting the value of diversity and independent "counter-forces". Freedom of choice for individuals, apart from being desirable *per se* on grounds of principles, also adds to the dynamics of society by creating competition between institutions and organisations that promotes quality.

20. The concepts of competition and choice, central to these ambitions, are new to the Swedish educational policy vocabulary. That they are more than ideologically inspired rhetoric is demonstrated by the specific measures designed to give effect to them, also recounted in the Report. The operational significance of these concepts cannot be fully grasped unless they are seen side by side with an equally important shift in priorities concerning educational purposes as such and in the criteria for assessing performance. Three such shifts are already evident.

21. There is, firstly, -- even though it is less explicitly expressed than the others -- a new accent on child and youth education, as against that of adults. This is reflected in the budgetary cut-backs for certain kinds of adult education and the debate concerning the abolition of the 25 plus 4 rule which has enabled non-academically qualified adults with work experience to participate in higher education. More generally, a coherent policy for adult education does not appear to be among the government's priorities.

22. Secondly, there is a clear move away from a pupil-centred approach to schooling and the social and personal development functions of schools towards their purely educational purposes based on subject knowledge and, in general, a reinforcement of the academic component of education at all its levels. Thus, earlier efforts to integrate preschool activities and schools have been abandoned; and marks will always be given in individual subjects whatever

inter-disciplinary grouping may be used in the way individual schools and classes organise their instruction. The same tendency is observed in the restructuring of higher education degree courses and in admission criteria. It is also reflected in the new scheme for teacher education for the upper levels of the comprehensive school, with a three-year academic course to be followed by one year of professional training, a system which will coexist with the one which has prevailed so far, by which academic and professional preparation were integrated throughout the duration of teacher training.

23. Finally, the marking system will be revised, towards "making school more demanding". Marks will be introduced at an earlier stage and the present system, where marks are group-referenced, will be replaced by a system where marks will be goal-referenced and thus related to the achievements of individual pupils. (See Background Report, Chapter 3.1). It is still not clear how the new marking system will be related to the evaluation tasks of the National Agency for Education. Its political significance is underlined by the fact that the elaboration of the system has been entrusted to a Parliamentary Commission.

Questions which arise

24. Taken together, the policy ambitions and the concepts and instruments used for their realisation, leave no doubt that government means business and that education in Sweden is in for a serious shake-up. The pace and extent of change will be largely influenced by the ability of the political leadership to make a convincing case of the validity of its policies and thus break down the corporatist resilience to change which, in Sweden as in other countries, the educational establishment traditionally shows. As we have hinted already, there is no hiding the fact that the "open goals" approach, with all its ambiguities, gives rise to suspicions among certain groups as to the real intentions of government and to doubts about the solidity of its argumentation. This we see as a first question which arises, namely the *style of policy-making*.

25. On the whole, previous major educational reforms in Sweden were implemented on the basis of the findings of thoroughgoing analyses, mostly through special Commissions in which the social partners and other interest organisations were represented. The process, often excessively protracted, generated an impressive volume of research and developmental activity, including pilot experimentation, to substantiate policy decisions. It also secured consensus on these decisions and their detailed application. It resulted in clarity of purpose and certainty of action, which those responsible for implementation found reassuring.

26. Remnants of this system are still evident, as witnessed by the Commissions working on curriculum reform and on marking. The basic approach, however, is now different. Policy decisions are prepared in a purely political or ministerial context, reflecting key objectives and concepts -- competition, choice, quality -- with relatively little prior "home-work" to back them up and leaving their implementation rather vague. Instead of pilot experimentation, the effort is concentrated on pushing through rapidly a number of landmark changes, even if on a small scale. Instead of entrusting the detailed elaboration of its provisional proposals to special commissions, government

prefers to publicise these proposals in their early raw state and thereby stimulate public debate on them prior to final decisions. All aspects of this approach are best exemplified by the government's memorandum on *Independence for Swedish Universities and University Colleges* and the negotiations in hand with a select number of higher education institutions for their conversion into independent "Foundations". A similar example can be seen in the attention given to the setting up of a number of private schools.

27. Clearly this type of policy-making has its advantages. Vigorous in its approach, it reduces the distance between the timing of governmental decisions and their translation into action, seen by many as a welcome relief from previous consultative practices. It also gives precedence -- justly so, in our opinion -- to the political context of these decisions over that of interest groups and experts. But for this to be effective, it is essential that such decisions should be backed by an adequate level of professionally informed analysis, and to the extent possible be related to an identifiable strategy for the development of Swedish education over the longer term. We recognize the difficulties involved in redefining the role of central policy-making at the present stage of rapid decentralisation and deregulation. Certainly one option is to allow a strategy to *evolve* rather than be imposed. We nonetheless draw attention to this point particularly because of what we observed as a wide-felt need among various stakeholders and users of education for clearer guidance as to the purport of the new policy pronouncements and measures and their intended consequences.

28. We observed this need to reduce the level of uncertainty repeatedly during our visit to Sweden, at the level of municipal authorities as well as among school and university leaders. We recognise that this forms part of the intention of government, in stirring up the system and encouraging local initiatives. We ask, however, whether more could not be done at the level of the Ministry towards greater clarity of its intentions and to improve communication with its local partners, professional groups and the public more generally.

29. Such a task would obviously add to the already overtaxed capacity of the ministry. By tradition, Swedish ministries are relatively small units mainly concerned with preparing government bills, administrative and supervisory tasks being left to specialised central agencies. We were impressed by the heavy burden which falls on the shoulders of the Ministry officials in preparing the new reforms, particularly at a time when they could not draw on inputs from the two traditional National Boards, one already disolved and the other under dissolution. Questions are thus raised about the *planning and co-ordination* role of the Ministry.

30. In Sweden, as in other countries, in education as in other sectors of policy, central planning, even of an indicative nature, is in disgrace. Yet priorities, across and within sectors, have constantly to be set, ultimately reflected in budgetary allocations. The political priority which education and training continue to enjoy in Sweden, even in times of financial constraints, is explicitly recognised in the Swedish Budget for 1992/93, the share of the Ministry of Education rising to 61.000 million kronor, as against 58.000 million for the previous year, i.e. a 4.3 per cent increase which fully compensates for inflation, (with an even greater increase for labour market training under the Ministry of Labour). Within this total allocation, one is

struck by the clarity with which educational priorities are stated -- school education, higher education and research as against folk high schools, study associations and municipal adult education, which see their share considerably reduced. Equally striking, however, is the relative absence of any reasoned justification of how these priority decisions have been made other than what derives from *a priori* political considerations. The fact that about half of the proposed reductions in municipal education have since been restored by Parliament is indicative of the problems to which this approach to priority setting can give rise.

31. This example raises the broader question of how educational policy is co-ordinated with industrial and employment policies. Given the importance which everyone in Sweden attaches to the development of active policies for human resource development, with its focus on the training and retraining of its labour force as an essential ingredient of the dynamism and competitiveness of the Swedish economy, it is surprising that only scant consideration is given to the contribution of the educational system to this concerted task. In fact, the onus seems to be left to labour market measures, the enterprises and individuals themselves. The extension of vocational lines in upper secondary school from two to three years is indeed a recognition of the importance of reinforcing the technical and general education competences of young entrants into the labour force; but the additional funding necessary for this reform has not yet been provided. In the words of the Swedish 1992/93 Budget Statement, "this reform will be implemented at the pace permitted by the economic situation and other conditions".

32. Priority, instead, has been given to increasing the intake into higher education, particularly in engineering and the natural sciences, and to improving research training with the objective of doubling the number of doctorates by the year 2000. No doubt this influx will contribute to industrial revitalisation, though it should be noted that: a) Sweden has already the highest proportion among OECD countries of students enrolled in technology; b) there is no evidence that industry has either the will or the capacity to absorb such a large increase in the number of people with doctorates. We discuss these problems in Section III of our report. For the purposes of our present discussion, however, questions are again raised as to the analytical bases on which decisions of this kind are made. But it would be fair to add that, on the whole, the Ministry's policy seems to be that it is through directing efforts at raising educational standards and improving the quality of education at school and university levels, and by reinforcing the internationalisation component of this education, that it can best contribute to the manpower needs of the Swedish economy in its new international context.

33. The questions we have raised above point to a need on the part of the Ministry of Education to reinforce its capacity for research and analysis, and to ensure co-ordination with other sectors. There is parallel need for closer co-ordination among the various educational sectors themselves, particularly as between upper secondary education and higher education, which are under the responsibility of different ministers. Such co-ordination will, of course, involve more than changes in the internal organisation of the Ministry. It will have to ensure an effective monitoring of the interplay between two decentralised systems, interpret their signals and channel student flows. This will be all the more necessary in view of the changes which are being introduced in upper secondary curricula and which will affect the flow of

students into higher education institutions, themselves in the process of revising their admission policies and criteria. It may well be, for example, that new types of post-secondary institutions would need to be envisaged to cope with the increased and more diversified demand for further studies beyond secondary schooling.

34. The precise forms which such new planning and co-ordination functions could take will, of course, depend on the final relationships which will be established between the Ministry and its officials, on the one hand, and the National Agency for Education and the two new units for higher education, on the other. These relationships will largely be determined by the distribution of roles among these bodies in ensuring the necessary *national steering* of a highly decentralised and deregulated system, and one which encourages competition and choice as the springboards of high standards and quality. "Distance-steering" surfaces as the central concept, with *evaluation* as its main instrument. Recognising that the situation is still very fluid, a number of questions nonetheless arise for consideration.

35. First, as to *competition, choice and quality*. This is the classical triptyque on on which markets operate. Carried to its logical conclusion, this model would imply the development of an educational market which, however, in the Swedish context, cannot but remain predominantly within the public sector. There is, indeed, the intention by government to encourage the growth of private schools -- and of independent universities in the form of "foundations", -- supported by public finance on the same basis as public schools under "the-money-follows-the-pupil" formula -- i.e. a kind of voucher system -- so as to increase opportunities for choice and serve as a catalyst for change. But from all we heard during our visit, such a private sector will remain relatively small -- five per cent of the total was the ultimate assumption mentioned. In practice, then, choice and competition will operate within municipal school dis.-icts and between individual schools in the public domain, and mostly within urban areas. The general expectation was that the existing order would be only marginally disturbed: firstly because of the uniformly good quality of schooling across the country -- though we did hear complaints about unspecified deficiencies, -- and secondly, because of the obligation of municipalities to cater in the first place to pupils living within their catchment areas -- even though there are various ways and strategies which individual pupils and their parents can employ to get around this restriction.

36. With the system only just beginning to be applied, it is difficult to tell whether this general expectation will be fulfilled or what the long-term consequences might be. Certainly the intention of government is to make better what is already recognised as being good, to establish peaks of excellence in order to pull the existing plateau of quality upwards. But we also heard fears expressed that such efforts, unless they are properly controlled, might release socially-biased elitist tendencies to the detriment of the rest of the system. For example, poor municipalities will not be able to compete with the more affluent ones in the recruitment of high quality, and therefore more expensive, teachers, or in the provision of facilities and range of curricula that would make their schools attractive. Similarly, individual schools, both public and private, might be encouraged to develop specific profiles, offering courses not available elsewhere, so as to attract pupils with special skills and interests away from their normal school setting. In the case of private

schools, special fees may be charged, thus attracting pupils whose parents can afford the extra expenditure. The use of household expenditure for the education of their children is something quite new in the tradition of Swedish families.

37. We discuss the ramifications of these questions in Section II below. In terms of national policy, the central dilemma which is raised is two-fold: how to ensure that the quest for quality does not lead to, or reinforce, socially-based levels of inequality, on the one hand, and how the encouragement of local variations does not break up the pattern of national standards and requirements. All countries are confronted with this dilemma and Sweden cannot avoid facing up to its reality. Its chosen instruments for doing so are: a) through the system of discriminatory block budgetary allocations to municipalities, based on a complex array of factors weighted to take account of the circumstances and resource capacity and needs of individual municipalities; b) the definition of a national curriculum, and of minimum requirements for university degrees; c) the installation of a central system for the evaluation of educational performance, at municipality, school and university levels.

38. *Evaluation* is the linchpin in the government's policy of ensuring high quality standards across the country. To anyone not familiar with Swedish administrative tradition, the logical location of this function would be within the Ministry of Education itself. It will in fact be carried out by central bodies outside the Ministry -- the National Agency for Education as far as schools are concerned and the Evaluation Unit for Universities, just being set up. Their authority emanates from government/parliament rather than the ministry itself. Detailed plans are still to be worked out, though those for the National Agency for Education are already well advanced. Combined with the marking system, evaluation will be statistically-based, complemented by qualitative judgements made by the Agency's regional representatives. The goals set by the national curriculum -- also still under elaboration -- will provide the yardstick against which municipalities and individual schools will be ranked. The evaluation process will be combined with advice and other support facilities, including teaching and leadership training, designed to remedy observed deficiencies. It will apply to public as well as private schools, and the latter will need to be accredited by the Agency before being allowed to operate.

39. It is not yet clear what precise use government will make of the results of evaluation. The "watch-dog" effect of the Agency's role will no doubt serve as a stimulus to individual municipalities and schools to keep their standards up and conform to the goals set in the national curriculum. So will the publication of rankings. Beyond this, it remains to be seen to what extent government can draw on the evaluation results to reward good performance or sanction municipalities or schools with bad results, e.g. by reducing or withholding funds. The same principles could be applied to universities, and individual faculties within them, though here the public image effect will be in itself more important. This partly explains the gusto with which universities themselves are beginning to indulge in self-evaluation. No efforts of a parallel intensity were observed at the level of schools, where accountability has not been part of their tradition.

40. In the absence of empirical experience of how the system will work, it is difficult for us to offer further comment, other than a reminder of the

pitfalls which surround all educational evaluation -- the danger of undue reliance on quantifiable outcomes as against the quality of the educational process, of treating evaluation as an external objective distinct from the pedagogical value of self-evaluation, etc., -- pitfalls with which our Swedish hosts involved in the development of their system were thoroughly familiar. In the last analysis, the determining factor will be the attitude to evaluation and its uses to be adopted by the political leadership, whether they see it primarily as an instrument of control as against its pedagogical and developmental value.

41. We would like to conclude this Section of our report with a brief reference to the *internationalisation* dimension of Swedish educational policy. The government has explicitly linked the quality issue in education with the exigencies of the new international position of Sweden, particularly its increased integration with the European Community. Specific measures are being taken to strengthen foreign language training at all levels of the educational system -- Sweden has already become an English-speaking country! -- to internationalise the context of education, in schools as well as in universities, to increase exchange activities and the opportunities of Swedish students to study abroad and to promote European co-operation in higher education and research. These measures are described in the Background Report. We cannot but commend Sweden for this openness to the outside world and express the hope that the specific steps which it is taking in this direction can serve as an inspiration to other countries. Internationalisation, of course, is broader than Europeanisation, and this should not be lost sight of; particularly for a country like Sweden with its long tradition of third-world conscience and action.

II. SCHOOLS AND ADULT EDUCATION

42. The notion of Sweden as a "learning society" finds its best expression in the remarkable achievements of its school and adult education systems, the backbone of the Swedish educational success story. A full picture of developments in these areas is given in the Background Report and we shall not attempt to repeat it here. We rather concentrate our comments on what we see as the more important implications for these sectors arising from recent changes in policy stances and approaches, particularly those adopted by the new government. In this way, we discuss in greater detail the operational consequences of these policies, the general features of which were touched upon in the preceding section.

A. Compulsory schooling and upper secondary education

43. As noted in our Introduction, Sweden is notable among the world's industrialised countries for having achieved a high degree of quality and equality in compulsory schooling. Between the ages of 7 and 16, Swedish children attend schools that are of extraordinarily high quality by any standard. Pupil/teacher ratios are low (ten to one, with average class sizes around 25-30), per pupil expenditures are high, resources are highly equalised among schools, and pupil achievement is remarkably equal by comparison to other industrialised countries. Teachers are well-educated. Curriculum is well-developed and schools are well equipped. The transition of pupils from compulsory to upper secondary schooling is virtually one hundred per cent. There are, certainly, some shortcomings in this picture. Immigrant children, for example, are primarily enrolled in schools with high concentrations of pupils like themselves. But these schools normally receive substantial extra resources to deal with the special needs of those children, as do schools more generally to facilitate the integration of children with disabilities.

44. Beyond the compulsory level, in upper secondary schools, the system is also notably successful, if a good deal less equalised. Participation rates in upper secondary education are high, drop-out rates are extremely low. Participation in university preparatory courses comprises just over 20 per cent of students (a decline from almost 30 per cent in the mid-1970s) and participation in vocational courses comprises nearly 80 per cent (an increase from just over 70 per cent in the mid-1970s). Transition rates for upper secondary graduates to universities are about 20 per cent within three years and about 30 per cent within 10 years.

45. The success of the Swedish educational system, as noted earlier, was achieved largely through strong national planning and control. This reliance on central planning as an expression of national commitment to education has been steadily eroding since the early 1980s. The reform agenda of the present government, as well as a number of reforms introduced by preceding social

democratic governments, have taken their point of departure from the basic principle of returning more authority and control over education to local government, to school professionals, and to individual parents and students.

New policy initiatives

46. The present government's position is expressed in at least three main policy initiatives toward compulsory and upper secondary education. The first set of policy initiatives is aimed at a greater decentralisation of administrative authority in the educational system, with a concomitant reduction in the national presence and a shift in the national role from planning and regulation to evaluation and assistance. The grant system was altered under the previous government to provide municipalities with greater discretion in how they spend educational funds; the government has pushed grant consolidation even further by combining all social expenditures into a single grant. Curriculum controls from the central government have been substantially simplified, including reductions in prescriptions about the scope and content of specialised upper secondary programmes, allowing municipalities considerable discretion over the content of instruction. The new National Education Agency has as its main charge evaluation, monitoring of performance and quality in schools, coupled with some modest assistance to schools. "Steering by goals", rather than by direct planning and regulation, has become the watchword of the government.

47. The second set of policy initiatives is aimed at increasing individual choice and competition in the provision of schooling. State grants to municipalities are designed to stimulate municipalities to develop plans that allow educational funding to follow the child within the public school system. Private schools will be eligible to receive public funding on the same basis as municipal schools, subject to limits on parental expenditures that are still being developed.

48. The third set of policy initiatives is aimed at increasing the focus of schools on the teaching of academic subject matter. Plans by the earlier social democratic government to merge preschool and compulsory schooling have been abandoned on the rationale that the primarily developmental purposes of preschool should be separated from the primarily educational purposes of compulsory schooling. In general, the government subscribes to the principle that responsibility for social development of children should, to the extent possible, be returned to parents. The new scheme for teacher education will give increased emphasis to academic content. And the marking system will be extended into earlier grades, with marks referenced to educational goals rather than to the academic performance of other children.

49. It is tempting to identify these initiatives as a major departure from the previous *status quo*. In fact, though, Swedish compulsory and upper secondary education has been in a more or less constant process of reform since at least the early 1980s. Compulsory school curriculum reform in 1980 gave substantial responsibility for curriculum decisions within national frameworks to individual schools, and set in motion an ambitious school-level planning requirement. A major period of experimentation designed to change the upper secondary school curriculum was initiated in the 1980s. Compulsory school teachers were retrained on a massive scale in mathematics after international

test results in 1985 reflected unfavourably on Swedish students' mathematics achievement. The government had already (in 1986) charged the National Board of Education with developing a national strategy for evaluation. Teacher education was reformed in 1988 to blur the distinction between "subject" and "class" teachers in compulsory schools. These and other activities suggest a high degree of attention to the improvement of academic learning and to decentralisation of authority through the 1980s.

50. Despite the continuities between present and past, Sweden is clearly at an important juncture in the development of its education system. In our discussions with municipal officials and school personnel, we sensed at the same time an enthusiasm for the changes in national policy being initiated by the present government and a deep concern about the possible consequences of these new policy directions. We saw evidence of both extraordinary innovation and entrepreneurship in response to shifts in national policy, as well as caution and resistance.

51. At the core of these opposing responses were a few central concerns. Is the move toward a more decentralised system for administration and governance of education motivated, as the government suggests, by a need to find new ways of improving the quality and relevance of education, or will it simply lead to a reduction of the national priority previously attached to providing universal access to high quality education? Is the move toward greater emphasis on choice motivated by the need to make schools more diverse, responsive and effective, or will it simply amount to providing preferential treatment for those with advantages that allow them to exploit choice, leaving the less advantaged to fend for themselves? Is the emphasis on academic subject matter, at the expense of Sweden's traditional concern for the social development of children, motivated by a concern to distinguish the role of schools and families, or will it pave the way for a narrowing of the mission of schooling in order to give it a less prominent role in the political and social life of the country? In what follows, we will try to give a picture of the range of responses we observed to changes in national policy and some of the major concerns expressed by those who will have to implement these changes.

Decentralisation: Quality and Equality

52. The idea "steering by goals", as opposed to detailed central plans and regulations, has been an explicit element of Swedish educational policy since at least 1987, when the government initiated an ambitious new programme of evaluation designed to put the national government more in the position of setting broad national goals, and municipalities more in the position of working out the details of their implementation. The present government's policies amplify this movement toward decentralisation by consolidating grants to municipalities and further reducing central regulation. As the Background Report notes, "the field is now open for local politicians and school professionals to take on their new responsibilities... Freedom and responsibility must be carried down to the schools and their professionals" (p. 106). Government officials argue that schooling is simply too diverse and far-flung an enterprise to be centrally-planned. The system needs diversity, flexibility and pluralism, and a more direct relationship to its immediate clients.

53. In our visits to municipalities and schools, we were impressed with how much genuine initiative is being exercised, and with the generally positive outlook of local officials and school professionals toward the assumption of new responsibilities under a more decentralised system. Some municipalities have embarked on an ambitious reorganisation of their governance and administrative structures in order to manage their increased responsibilities. They have, for example, separated the policy making and "production" or service-delivery parts of local government, with the idea of giving policy makers more control and flexibility in deciding how services are to be organised and delivered. In these municipalities, schools will assume a role more akin to contractors than to subordinate administrative units. Most municipalities we visited already had plans underway to increase the diversity of educational options available to students and parents by encouraging schools to develop distinctive subject matter and pedagogical profiles. A few municipalities had already initiated ambitious school-site budgeting systems, which would allow schools to manage their own resources. We saw, in other words, substantial evidence in municipalities and schools of movement toward the type of diverse and pluralistic system that the government envisages.

54. We also noted, however, considerable concern and uncertainty about the course of decentralisation and its intended purposes. One recurring theme in our discussions with local officials and school professionals was the effect of present decentralisation initiatives on the traditional Swedish commitment to "equivalence" among schools. The idea of equivalence has never been tightly defined, but it stands for a broad commitment to providing Swedish students with roughly equal opportunities and resources for learning, at least during compulsory schooling. While virtually everyone we spoke to acknowledged that some diversity among schools is a value worth pursuing, many were concerned that the new policies were simply a sugar-coated way of retreating from a national commitment to a high quality education for every Swedish child. This retreat, many worry, could lead in the future to reduced priority for schooling at the national level and greater disparities in educational opportunity among localities and schools. While the government espouses the idea that greater local control and competition will lead to higher quality of educational services, a number of people expressed concern that without careful planning they could lead to a dilution of commitment to a common set of educational experiences that will knit society together.

55. Government officials have done little to ally these concerns. They argue that complaints of this kind are to be expected as constraints are relaxed and people confront the uncertainties of taking greater responsibility. They also argue that the defects of the earlier, centralised system have not been clearly exposed and understood -- that many of the problems with traditional notions of equivalence were muted precisely because the old centralised structure damped dissent and diversity. Despite these responses, we were left with a strong impression that many local officials and school professionals would like to know more about the government's vision of where its policies will lead and what its position is on Sweden's long-standing commitment to equalising educational opportunity -- an area in which its success, at least at the compulsory school level, has been internationally recognised.

Evaluation: Steering by Goals

56. In our view, a large part of the success in reconciling the government's desire for diversity with the traditional Swedish commitment to equivalence lies in how the government and the National Education Agency define the national role in evaluating schools. It is possible that the Swedish educational system is moving toward a new conception of equivalence, based more on how schools affect pupil learning than on whether they provide pupils with equal access to learning opportunities. Such a commitment to "outcome equivalence" implies that the national government is willing to invest considerable resources in discovering and documenting school performance, and in remediating poor performance when it threatens equivalence. Such a commitment also implies that the government is prepared to say how much variation among schools -- by whatever standard -- is acceptable, and to suggest what should happen when this level of variation is exceeded. Our discussions with key staff at the National Education Agency suggest that, while they are enthusiastic about their new role in evaluating and supporting schools, they have as yet been given little or no policy guidance on the relationship between their activity and the traditional Swedish commitment to equivalence.

57. Nor is it very clear at the moment what the division of labour will be between national and local bodies in the evaluation of schools under the general policy of "steering by goals". The government clearly envisages an enhanced role for the National Education Agency. Agency staff are strong and committed to constructing a positive role for themselves. But they face an enormous task which will tax their capacity to the full in monitoring individual schools and in finding the necessarily resources to provide useful guidance when schools' performance is found wanting. Our conversations with county officials suggest that they too are eager to play some role in a new decentralised scheme. Municipal officials, and the school administrators who are accountable to them, clearly should have an important role to play in any goal-directed system of evaluation, since they are ultimately responsible for delivering on the goals that are set. We found considerable support for the idea of steering by goals at the local level, but also considerable uncertainty about its specific consequences for local evaluation. Should localities assume greater responsibility for evaluating their own schools, in line with the general trend toward decentralisation of authority, or should they defer to the National Education Agency, in line with the belief that monitoring should be done at higher levels by those with a more detached perspective? In either case, closer attention perhaps could be given to the development of school-based reviews, a notion which does not seem to have taken root in Sweden so far. Such school-based reviews could provide key inputs to the qualitative audits to be undertaken by the National Education Agency. Agency staff could, in fact, assist in such reviews, as is the trend in a number of other European countries, e.g. France and England, which have recently re-organised the roles and functions of their central inspectorates in this direction. (There is, of course, no formal inspectorate tradition or function in Sweden).

58. Implementing the idea of "steering by goals" may require, at least in the short term, more, rather than less, national guidance, albeit a different kind of guidance. While there has been much talk about the importance of national goals in Swedish education for several years, the infrastructure of national planning and regulation by which the educational system has been

governed does not stress goals. Nor are there clear structures or processes at the national level for discussing and generating broad consensus on goals for education under the kind of decentralised governance structure that the government envisages. Previously, goals had been discussed around detailed national policies on such matters as curriculum. Under a more decentralised system, such discussions would presumably occur at a more general level through a different kind of structure. We could detect no explicit structure or process for discussing and setting national goals under a more decentralised approach, beyond those which will be prescribed in the national curriculum currently being designed. Setting such a structure in place, and using it to direct the attention of municipalities and schools toward common national ends, might involve considerable national guidance, though of a different kind that Swedish schools have previously experienced. Curriculum-driven goals, important as they undoubtedly are, can by no means encompass the totality of national goals in education.

A New Mix of Relationships

59. Another recurring theme in our discussions was uncertainty about what decentralisation means for the future relationships among local officials, school professionals, and parents. One possibility is that decentralisation means greater political and client control of schools. Another possibility is that teachers and administrators will assume greater responsibility in articulating the goals and programme content of schools, and that local politicians and parents will periodically check on their performance through established monitoring routines. A third possibility is that administrators at the municipality and school levels will set the direction that schools should take, and that teachers, parents, and policy makers will periodically make their preferences known through routine processes.

60. These three types of decentralisation -- the political, the professional, and the managerial -- have very different implications for relations between local officials, educators, and parents. They are of considerable consequence for the future of Swedish education. A decentralised system based primarily on political incentives could be one in which there are rather substantial variations in the priority and quality of education, depending on the political support and fiscal capacity of municipalities. A decentralised system based primarily on professionalism could yield a more equal distribution of educational opportunities, but could also lead to considerable strains between local political leaders and professionals. A decentralised system based primarily on managerial incentives could lead to a system that is well run in traditional bureaucratic terms, but unresponsive to the preferences of local officials, community members, and professionals. We saw evidence of all three types of decentralisation in the municipalities we visited. The different views they hold will be worked out in myriad decisions about finance, budget, personnel, curriculum, and organisation in local governments and schools. How these views are to be balanced is a matter of considerable uncertainty and one that may require active policy guidance, not simply passive reliance on local problem-solving. So far, the government has chosen to remain agnostic on this subject.

61. A closely-related theme in our discussions was the future union-management relations in a decentralised system. The block grants

initiated by the government give unprecedented fiscal and administrative autonomy to municipalities. One dimension of this autonomy, according to government officials, is increased control over school personnel. In the past, Swedish municipalities have hired teachers and school administrators, but have done so within collective bargaining agreements worked out between unions and a state agency at the national level. Since 1991 there is no State involvement in this. Formal responsibility rests with the municipalities but the Association of Municipalities undertakes central negotiation on their behalf. These are, however, clear tendencies towards decentralising these negotiation. No one seems to know what the consequences of greater decentralisation will be for the system of collective bargaining, but virtually everyone anticipates that it will change in some substantial way. Union officials, representatives of municipalities, local political leaders and administrators, as well as school leaders and teachers all expressed considerable uncertainty about both the practical meaning of greater municipal control over school personnel decisions and its potential effects. Locally-bargained labour agreements in education would constitute a major shift from past practice and would raise questions of equity and equivalence, since municipalities vary considerably in their fiscal and managerial capacities. While a locally-decentralised approach to bargaining might be appealing to those who worry about the concentration of power at the national level that comes with national bargaining, no one is presently prepared to implement such an approach and little thought has been given to its potential effects. In this, as in other areas, cultivated uncertainty seems to be the dominant feature of policy.

Pedagogical Innovation: the Great Absentee

62. A final observation about decentralisation stems from our observations of schools and our conversations with teachers and school leaders. While we found an impressive amount of innovation in organisation and governance around compulsory and upper secondary education, we found considerably less evidence of innovation in pedagogy and content. This finding contrasts with what we observed in higher education, where we saw considerable evidence among university faculty and administrators of a willingness to experiment in very significant ways with new approaches to teaching and academic content. For reasons we are unable to explain fully, there was little evidence of innovation in the instructional core of compulsory and upper secondary schools and little support expressed by teachers for the kind of dramatic departures from existing practice that we found examples of in every university we visited.

63. It may well be that school operators have not yet recovered from the impact of the long tradition of central planning and regulation and the passive role which such a system inculcated in the exercise of their profession. Be that as it may, it is equally clear that decentralisation of authority and innovation in organisation and governance do not in themselves lead automatically to innovations in teaching and learning. This has become an increasingly commonplace finding in research on educational innovation across a number of countries. Innovation in teaching and learning, it appears, requires extensive infusions of new knowledge and support for learning among teachers and administrators, not just increased autonomy. No extensive network of support structures for schools, of the kind existing in many OECD countries, has so far been developed in Sweden. If the government expects decentralisation to lead to innovation and greater diversity in educational programmes among

schools, then it will probably have to initiate a more active R&D policy in education directed at comparative analyses of local innovative trends and their outcomes, and provide incentives and support structures which encourage teachers and administrators to act as innovators, drawing on the needs and resources of their local environment. (We have since learnt that the National Education Agency is undertaking, with the help of outside experts, a review of State-funded educational research).

Choice

64. Closely related to decentralisation in the present government's policy is the idea that pupils and parents should exercise more individual choice of schools. Thus far, the government has advanced policies that would stimulate municipalities to let public funds follow students to the schools they choose, within and between municipalities, and even to private schools. In principle, nothing proposed by the government goes further than these proposals toward challenging the tradition of equivalence among educational programmes and public responsibility for education. In practice, there is considerable disagreement over the intent behind the proposals as well as their expected effect.

65. We found evidence that some localities have already begun to provide pupils and parents with greater choice. In one major municipality area, for example, the Director of Education argues that the best way to avoid having to compete with private schools is to ensure that available public alternatives are strong enough to preclude competition. Another smaller municipality has hired a Director of Education from the private sector, who also has public education experience. This administrator has set in motion an extensive programme of school-site management and choice among all schools in the municipality. This municipality has adopted a general approach to diversifying and privatising public services. Two municipalities we visited were experimenting with privatising public education by subsidising the formation of private alternative preschools and primary schools. School administrators in these municipalities expressed reservations about the use of public funds to subsidise the setting up of private schools, but were doing so at the direction of elected municipal officials. Our visits covered only a very small number of localities, and were not in any sense representative, but the amount of activity we observed around school choice was nonetheless impressive.

66. We also observed, though, considerable diversity of opinion around the choice issue. One municipality we visited, for example, was adamant in resisting the idea that it should modify its present structure to allow choice within the public sector, and even more resistant to the idea of using public money to subsidise private schools. This happened also to be a municipality which was pursuing a fairly ambitious programme of restructuring local government and decentralised decision making.

67. Among the representatives of national education groups with whom we spoke there was widespread scepticism about the government's choice proposals. Some argued that the proposals constituted a diversion of public funds from public schools at a time when public education was most in need of the government's financial support. Others argued that the proposals undermine the traditional Swedish commitment to equivalence by introducing strong incentives

for more affluent parents to move their children into more desirable public or private schools, leaving less affluent parents with more restricted choices. They fear that school choice will further aggravate the social isolation of low income and minority children. Still others argued that the present system for evaluating schools does not provide sufficient information for parents to use in making reliable judgements about the quality of schools. Therefore, they argue, advantages will accrue to those parents willing to invest their own resources in learning about schools, and parents without such resources will be at a disadvantage.

68. Government officials with whom we spoke argued, on the one hand, that there was little to be concerned about, since they doubted that more than 3-5 percent of pupils would ever enrol in private schools. On the other hand, they argued that choice was an important guarantee that public schools would have to respond to parents. When asked how they would address large disparities and inequalities in educational opportunity, if they happened to occur under a system of choice, the same officials argued that the Swedish people would not allow such disparities to occur, but did not explicitly say what policies they would pursue to reduce these inequalities. These kinds of responses are difficult to shape into a coherent statement of the government's intentions. Beyond the generalities -- greater diversity, more individual responsibility, greater public responsiveness, higher quality -- it is difficult to glean exactly what the government expects to accomplish with its choice policies and how it intends to deal with the undesirable side-effects of the policies. (It should be noted that the question of fees was temporarily settled at the end of March with a decision by government that for the time being private schools will be allowed to charge fees only for additional services, not for the school in general).

69. There are at least three areas in which greater clarification of the government's intentions about educational choice would be useful: Who is responsible for overseeing the effects of increased choice? Against what criteria will the effectiveness of choice policies be assessed? And within what constraints will choice operate?

70. At present, there is wide variability in the responses of local governments to the general policy direction the government has given. Some of the responses appear to be innovative and promising. But a number of municipalities either have no clear idea what the implications of choice are for the delivery of education, or they see implications they dislike and are actively resisting the government's policies. We found no one interested in or responsible for assessing how these varied responses of municipalities will affect pupils' access to education. Nor did we find much inquisitiveness about the criteria that one would use to distinguish a good from a bad result. On the government side, the argument seems to be that the policy would be deemed successful if parents felt satisfied with their choices, regardless of the educational consequences of choice policies for groups of pupils. This is accompanied by the conviction that choice will indeed improve pupil performance. We were unable to discover any systematic effort to determine what criteria might be used to determine the success or failure choice policies. Nor did we find much detailed discussion of how choice might be constrained. For example, what constraints will operate on the type of private institutions eligible to receive public support? Will municipalities be required to engage in activities that equalise opportunities for choice among

public schools, such as information, parent outreach activities, equalised school admission criteria, etc? These concerns, and others, all fall under the heading of details that could have large consequences for the way choice policies affect equity and equivalence in the Swedish system.

71. There is considerable international experience with school choice that Sweden can use to inform its own policies. Australian states have, for some time, been embarked on a programme of public subsidies for private schools very close to the one proposed by the Swedish government. A number of states and localities in the U.S. have experimented with varieties of school choice within the public schools. The evidence on the effects of these policies is far from clear, but it does suggest some caution in moving towards a system of unfettered choice. There is tentative evidence, for example, that Australian public/private school choice has significantly increased stratification by income and race. Evidence from the U.S. suggests that choice plans within public schools can be designed to minimise the stratification of students by income and race, but doing so requires a large public investment in parent information, outreach activities, and careful attention to the development of educational programmes that are appealing to broad segments of the population.

72. We formed the impression, talking with officials, that the present government would like to move quickly to get a national commitment to educational choice. This pressure for quick action stems in part from the government's impatience with what it regards as the resistance and inertia of the public schools and in part from their judgement that the issue is politically ripe for decision.

73. As could be expected, this question featured prominently in our discussions throughout our visit to Sweden, with the government's decision to move quickly at the centre of the controversy. Seeing that the issue goes to the heart of Swedish values about equivalence and public responsibility in education, it seemed to us in the end that a more extensive discussion of the detailed questions of policy design, and perhaps some systematic experimentation and inquiry around the whole issue of school choice, would be a more fruitful course of action. The government would risk little in taking a more considered approach to choice policy. They could manifest their commitment to greater diversity and choice in schooling by initiating a number of choice experiments, while at the same time making it possible to understand the problems of designing fair choice programmes and the possible affects of those programmes. We were assured that a number of municipalities would willingly engage in experimentation around this issue, and the government could add resources to these experiments to evaluate their effects and derive lessons for other municipalities. Perhaps the government could also use this process of pilot experimentation to give the public a clearer picture of its motivation for pursuing choice policies.

Focusing Schools on Academic Content

74. A final major theme of the government's policies toward compulsory and upper secondary schooling is the focus on academic content. It was already decided, under the previous government, to reinforce the academic content in upper secondary vocational programmes by extending them to a uniform three years. The new proposals advanced include making a clear demarcation between

preschool and primary school, increasing the academic content in teacher training, and extending the marking system into the early grades and basing it more on goal-referenced outcomes than on achievement relative to other pupils. In general, the government's objectives are to distinguish more clearly between the responsibilities of parents and schools by reducing the schools' responsibilities for social adjustment and by focusing them more on academic purposes. The specific proposals that follow from these general objectives are still in formation. The Commission on Curriculum Reform and the Commission on Marks, both constituted under the previous government, have been given revised instructions and are presently considering a number of measures relevant to this theme. We will focus our comments on three issues that grow out of the government's concern for increasing the focus of schools on academic content: the training of teachers and school leaders; the possible consequences of changes in the marking system on teaching and learning in schools; and the possible consequences of changes in upper secondary curriculum for the transition to post-secondary education.

75. To demonstrate its concern for focusing *teacher education* on academic content, the government has proposed an alternative approach to training teachers for forms 4-9, which allows teachers in training to focus mainly on academic subjects and then to take a concentrated one-year course of practical pedagogical training. This proposal runs against the prevailing view embodied in the teacher education curriculum that teacher education in academic subjects should be integrated with pedagogical training. The government argues that the present system restricts entry of potential teaching candidates whose primary interest is in disciplinary subjects and it undervalues knowledge in these subjects as preparation for teaching.

76. Teacher educators and representatives of national teacher organisations expressed a number of concerns about the government's proposals. The most common concern we heard was that the government's proposal to reform teacher education comes at a particularly inopportune time. Teacher education programmes are still engaged in implementing a major reform initiated in 1988, which was designed to blur the distinction between "student-" and "subject-centered" teachers. The first products of this new system have just entered teaching. The introduction of still another new approach to teacher education is seen as creating additional burden and confusion within teacher training institutions.

77. Another concern was a more general unease with the government's views on the separation of academic content from children's social development in education. Sweden has an international reputation for its success in combining attention to social development with academic learning in the early grades. All of the primary schools we visited manifested a strong commitment to this approach. The government's view is that this tradition should be subjected to more critical scrutiny, both because its educational effects may be questionable and because it intrudes on the responsibilities of the family for the child's social development. Many of our interlocutors, however, observed that the present emphasis on combining social development and academic learning has an important educational effect that the government appears to be overlooking. They argue that because children are introduced in the early grades to academic learning in a non-threatening and non-competitive way, they develop a greater receptivity to more demanding academic content in later years of schooling. We have no evidence to evaluate this claim, but it seems an

important question to resolve in the light of the government's expressed objective to increase the overall academic competence of students leaving the Swedish educational system.

78. A more fundamental issue regarding the training of teachers and school leaders arises in the context of the government's policies toward decentralisation and choice discussed above. As we noted earlier, we found considerable evidence of innovation in organisation and management in pre-collegiate education, but not nearly as much evidence of innovation in basic curriculum and pedagogy. We think this issue is related in important ways to how teachers and school leaders are trained.

79. The decentralisation and choice proposals of the government have substantial implications for the roles that teachers and school administrators will be expected to assume in the future. If these proposals are to lead to greater professional empowerment, as the government suggests, then teachers and school administrators will have to assume more responsibility for such things as the development of new school profiles, curriculum that matches these profiles and still meets national learning objectives, new forms of school organisation, and new ways of relating to parents and communities. At present, the bulk of teachers are not prepared for these broader responsibilities in their pre-service education and there appears to be no focused effort to provide preparation through in-service programmes. School leaders are presently prepared through a process in which municipalities provide compulsory in-service training courses in basic administrative skills, with no formal academic instruction beyond these courses explicitly addressed to the special responsibilities of administrators. This training varies significantly from one municipality to another in quality and coverage. While it is clear that Sweden can attract able people to administrative roles in education, it is not clear that the present system of training for administrators is adequate to prepare them for the increased expectations that will operate on them in a more decentralised system.

80. We think there is a compelling argument for more explicit attention to what kind of skills will be required of teachers and administrators by increased decentralisation and choice, and a more explicit treatment of these skills in teacher and administrator training, both pre-service and in-service. In this context, we understand that the government, on the basis of an outside evaluation of School Leader Education, is considering a proposal to develop university type institutes for such education, the boards of which will be fully representative of the major stakeholders. We fully support this proposal, all the more essential because of the increase in the number of school leaders resulting from the phasing out of the district school leader under the decentralisation process.

81. In general, it was clear to us in our conversations with educators that the government has significant work ahead of it in mobilising the talents and energies of professional educators around its reform agenda. Many educators are sympathetic with the need for greater school-level responsibility and diversity. Teachers and administrators in Sweden are extraordinarily talented and committed professionals. At present, though, there are serious questions about whether professional educators have the knowledge and skills needed to respond to the reform agenda proposed by the government, and these questions can only be addressed by bringing professional educators into the discussion of

reform and by supporting the development of new knowledge and skills systematically directed at their new responsibilities.

82. Sweden has been distinguished among advanced industrialised countries in its refusal to use *marking and examinations* in the early grades at a time when most countries have created increased pressure for academic performance among young children. The government's reform of the marking system constitutes a reversal of this policy, and we think this issue bears careful examination. As noted above, it is at least arguable that the emphasis on social development and the restrained use of marking and examinations in the early grades create a predisposition for pupils to engage in learning academic content that may not be present in a system where the stakes are higher and more visible.

83. The government's approach to the reform of marking seems to stem mainly from a concern for making *teachers* and *schools* more accountable for academic performance, while not ignoring the effects of performance assessment on pupil learning. The terms of reference of the Commission on Marking do in fact underline the importance of marks as a pedagogical took in addition to their functions as instruments of selection. It should be possible to formulate a responsible approach to teacher and school accountability that is also flexible enough to accommodate legitimate concerns about pupil development and learning. We think that Swedish policy makers should think carefully about this issue, and examine, in particular, the consequences of increased emphasis on formal pupil assessment on pupil learning, before following the lead of other industrialised countries and increasing formal assessment in the early grades.

84. The government adheres to the policy already agreed for the *enhancement of the academic content in vocational lines* by extending them uniformly to three years. There is broad support for this reform among educators and local officials and a feeling that the increased flexibility it brings could result in important innovations. The only concern we heard expressed were with the implications of upgrading the academic content of vocational programmes on the transition from secondary to post-secondary education, -- including the need for a more systematic approach to guidance and counselling -- and with the delays in governmental funding for their extension to three years.

85. Presently, vocational programmes enrol the largest proportion of upper secondary students, between 70 and 80 percent. A very small proportion of these students advance directly to higher education, less than 10 per cent. The government's objectives to increase higher education enrolments, especially in science and technology, linked to the upgrading of the academic content of vocational programmes (decided in 1991), raise the question of the relationship between upper secondary enrolments and the transition to higher education. Should we expect the transition rate from vocational programmes to higher education to increase? Or should we expect a smaller proportion of upper secondary students to enrol in up-graded vocational programmes at the upper secondary level in line with the government's objective to increase higher education enrolments?

86. A number of the university officials we spoke with argued that many students leaving academic lines in upper secondary schools, while nominally eligible for higher education, were not well-prepared for university work. Their reservations about students from vocational programmes were even more serious. Clearly, continuing the objective of increasing enrolment in higher

education with the objective of upgrading the upper secondary curriculum raises serious questions about how the two systems mesh. It may be possible, with careful planning of the transition, to create opportunities for the development of new programmes between the traditional academic and vocational lines at the upper secondary schools that will enhance opportunities for some students to advance to higher education and provide more flexibility in the upper secondary curriculum. As we have already indicated, in Section I, capacity for such co-ordinated planning of the links between upper secondary and higher education does not at present exist within the structures of the Ministry of Education or other central agencies.

B. Adult Education at the Crossroads

87. As the Background Report suggests, Sweden has been an international leader in adult education, both in terms of providing a diversity of alternatives to adult learners and in terms of the level of participation among adults in formal and informal education activities. In no other country has the role of adult education within overall educational policy been more pronounced and no other country has made more efforts to provide adults without advanced education more opportunities for a second chance in bringing them back into the mainstream of formal institutions and credentials. Similarly, Sweden has been known for its propagation of the "recurrent education model" aimed at reducing educational disparities in pre-career education and at providing opportunities for further training, both for general and professional purposes, at any time in one's life course when training might be required and further learning desired. Policies for pro-active adult training kept unemployment low in Sweden whereas most other countries put adults on re-training only after they had become unemployed.

88. Apart from its extensive coverage, perhaps the most notable feature of Swedish adult education policy has been the effort to establish links between adult education and regular educational routes. Thus Grundvux could lead to the completion of certain stages of compulsory education, thereby giving individuals the necessary qualifications for entrance to upper secondary education. Komvux and Folkhögskolan could provide complete course programmes equivalent to upper secondary education. The system also enabled adults to take those courses which were required in order to be eligible for a special admission route to higher education, under the 25 + 4 arrangement, as well as courses which had to be completed in order to meet the special requirements for admission to certain fields of study normally requiring full completion of a corresponding upper secondary programme.

89. Yet, apart from higher education provision for adults, adult education continued to remain distinct from education for the young, almost as varied and as separate as in most other industrialised countries -- a melange of formal education at basic and advanced levels administered by municipalities and informal state-subsidised education provided through an extensive network of voluntary organisations.

90. There are now signs of considerable uncertainty and disagreement over the future direction of adult education policy. Our discussions with national and local officials surfaced widely divergent views about what should be done. Some argued that adult education should be given increased attention as a

national priority because of the increasing proportion of adults in the population and the increasing importance of enhancing the skills of the workforce as Sweden faces increased international competition. Others argued that, while it may be important to provide education and training to adults, the present system is scattered, inefficient, and not as responsive as it could be to emerging social and economic needs.

91. In 1991, national funding for municipal adult education was combined into a single block grant with funding for compulsory and upper secondary schooling, giving municipalities increased responsibility for determining the mix of services offered to youth and adult populations. At roughly the same time, the government proposed major cuts in funding for adult education. While these cuts were significantly reduced by parliamentary action, they sent a strong signal through the country that adult education is undergoing critical scrutiny at the national level.

92. From the 1960s through the 1980s, the general direction of national policy had been to increase access to adult education and to diversify the types and levels of education available. Now it is apparent that this period has come to an end. The 1991 adult education reforms instead envisage a system in which municipalities are expected to play a major role in co-ordinating educational services across the youth and adult populations under steady or decreasing resources. Adult education has assumed a lower priority in the present government's education policies, and the expectation is that quality in adult education will be increased through better management and organisation at the local level, rather than through increased funding and planning from the national level.

93. In our visits to municipalities, we found considerable support for the idea that adult education needs new direction and organisation if it is to play a part in the economic and social development of Sweden. The inherent virtue of Swedish adult education up to this point has been its diversity and accessibility. But in its extraordinary growth over the past thirty years, Swedish adult education has also become expensive, fragmented, and redundant in ways that may not be appropriate for the future. Most people with whom we spoke at the national and local levels viewed diminishing national priority for adult education with alarm, but acknowledged that the existing organisation of adult education programmes needed careful reformulation.

94. Further decentralisation of responsibility for adult education to the municipalities is not, by itself, a solution to the problems facing adult education. Decentralisation could just as likely lead to a further balkanisation of services at the local level as to greater coherence and integration. In order for decentralisation to work, it must be accompanied by the introduction of intermediate structures that promote access but also provide more coherence and articulation among different programmes serving similar populations. We found some evidence of these structures in our visits to certain localities. In at least two municipalities we found innovative intermediate structures for orchestrating diverse programmes around common purposes. In one, surplus land in an economically declining part of the city was used to create a common site that combined upper secondary vocational programmes, municipal adult education programmes, and employment training funded with both private and public funds. In another, a neighbouring university copyrighted in establishing a centre to provide diverse educational

opportunities in a relatively isolated rural area. Such changes will occur on a piecemeal basis without much state direction or planning. but if they are to become a common feature of the organisation of educational services, they will require more concerted assistance across municipalities.

95. We share the uncertainty expressed by the government and many informed educators about the future of adult education in Sweden. On the one hand, the increasing proportion of adults in the population and the mounting demands of international economic competition suggest that certain forms of adult education, particularly recurrent education and training designed to upgrade skills and knowledge, will continue to be important. On the other hand, the proportion of Swedish adults with a high level of formal schooling is increasing and will continue to do so, which suggests that there will probably be a declining demand for more basic forms of adult education. We also sense that the cost of adult education is becoming a highly visible political issue in Swedish society, and, therefore, that more efficient forms of organisation and delivery will be required if adult education is to hold its own over the long term. The strength of the adult education lobby will not in itself be able in the future to generate the political support necessary to sustain previous levels of public fundings.

96. Our own conclusion is that rather than letting adult education erode continuously, an assessment of the state of affairs and future needs might be opportune. This is all the more necessary because both demographic changes and social and economic developments raise new needs for continuous re-learning which puts adult education in 1990s more strongly on the agenda than in the past. Most experts agree, for example, that the link between general and vocational education and training for adults deserves closer attention. Perhaps this would be the task of a Commission to examine the whole field of adult education and its inter-relationships with employment training. Some successful experiments have already been undertaken of establishing joint facilities for various kinds of vocational training. Models such as the Lindholmen Knowledge Centre in Gothenburg suggest that joint facilities are not only cost-saving but might also stimulate new inter-relationships in adult education and training.

III. HIGHER EDUCATION

97. The reform of higher education is a high, if not the highest, priority in the educational policies of the present government. The Background Report indicates the far-reaching scope of the intended reforms, their underlying rationale and motivations, the objectives to which they are directed and the principal means for their implementation. A fairly precise schedule for the reforms has been established, designed to expedite the process, with a view to its completion by autumn 1993. Thus, a number of decisions have already been put into effect, e.g. the increase in the number of student intake and the dissolution of the National Board of Universities and Colleges, while the intention with regard to others has been clearly announced, e.g. the possibility open to individual institutions of higher education to acquire the status of "foundations", the use of money available under the Employee Investment Funds (to the tune of one billion Swedish crowns annually over the next ten years) to support research and the expansion of graduate education, and the revision of the student aid system. Major proposals for legal and structural reforms were presented to Parliament in summer 1992 and similar proposals for the reform of the content of studies and on research will be published in early 1993. The basic thinking for these decisions is embodied in the Government Memorandum on "Independence for Universities and University Colleges", published in January 1992, to be used as a basis for discussion, particularly with the universities, before the final proposals were submitted to Parliament.

98. These proposals were not avaialble at the time of our visit to Sweden and it would be invidious on our part to comment on the detailed contents of the new policy. It must be recognised, however, that the formulation of such proposals, and their viability, will be largely determined by as careful an appreciation as possible of the main parameters which affect the functioning and performance of the Swedish higher education system and of the main trends and factors behind them. It is this which we attempt to do below by reference to a number of themes identified for their centrality to the current higher education debate in Sweden.

Quantitative development and the demand for graduates

99. As stated in the Background Report, there is concern in Sweden about the level of its higher education output in comparison to other countries. "Seen in an international perspective, the proportion of the population in Sweden with higher education is at an average level, and obviously we run the risk of slipping behind a lot of other countries" (p.89). A similar view was clearly expressed to us by the Swedish Employers' Federation, particularly as regards the need for a higher number of graduates in engineering and economics. Meeting this need will become all the more problematical if existing short

(one-and-a-half to two-year) programmes are to be lengthened in order to adopt to E.C. norms.

100. A look at the data provided in the Background Report shows that this anxiety may well be justified. Whereas around the mid-seventies Sweden was ahead of other European countries in the number of secondary school graduates qualified for higher education and in the proportion of new entrants among the corresponding age group, this advantage was eroded during the eighties. The number of young people completing upper secondary education varied between 80.000 and 95.000, the change over time being determined demographically. During the same period the number of applicants for higher education programmes (excluding single subject courses) was just over 70.000. The number of new entrants remained more-or-less constant during this period, at about 40.000 to 45.000, again excluding students in single subject courses. The total number of university degrees and diplomas awarded in 1977/78 was about 32.000. It increased to about 36.000 in the period 1982-89 and thereafter decreased to about 29.700. The number of doctorate awards increased during this period from about 750 to about 1.000. Licentiates, i.e. awards on a level between the master's degree and the doctorate, which had been abolished in the mid-seventies, were re-introduced in the 1980s: over 400 were awarded in 1989/90.

101. It is against this statistical background the the new government's commitment to an expansion of the numbers of higher education students and graduates has to be seen. A first decision already taken is to add 7.000 new places for initial degree programmes, with the intention of raising this figure eventually to 18.000 new annual study places, over and above the nearly 50.000 provided in 1990/91. (The Ministry of Labour advocates an even faster rate of growth in order to relieve youth unemployment). At the same time, a target has been set of doubling the number of doctoral degrees -- to 2.000 -- by the end of the decade. These are highly ambitious targets which call for comment with regard to both their desirability and their feasibility.

102. There is no doubt as to the widespread consensus regarding the *expansion of initial degree programmes*. Such expansion can be achieved without posing an immediate threat to existing standards of quality, seeing that the number of qualified applicants has been in substantial excess over those who have been admitted to higher education since many years now. There are, admittedly, complaints voiced about the general level of higher education entrants and the suitability of many of them for university study, as there are about the standards of undergraduate studies. But quality issues in higher education are not discussed in relation to the quantity of intake. More problematical in achieving the desired levels of expansion, over the medium term, will be the steady decline in the age cohort of 20-year olds, from about 130.000 in the mid-eighties and about 115.000 in the early nineties to an estimated 96.000 in 1998. This would imply a doubling, over the next ten years or so, of the new entrants quota, from just over 30 per cent in 1987 to about 60 per cent in the late nineties.

103. The speed set for the expansion of *doctorates* -- doubling this number within the next 8 to 9 years -- seems more unrealistic; not least because the average time span between the completion of a first degree and a doctoral degree is almost as long as the period set for the achievement of this objective. Thus the target set by government could only be achieved if a

doubling of intake into doctoral programmes was realised within one or two years and/or if the prevailing duration of post-graduate studies was to be significantly reduced.

104. On the desirability side, it should be noted that the demand for more doctorates derives essentially from the needs of the *academic labour market*. It is the official aim set by government that all academic staff in institutions of higher education should hold doctoral degrees. Very few other countries -- notably Germany -- pursue such an ambitious aim and its necessity can be seriously questioned. However, we were informed that the number of doctorates awarded annually in Sweden in fields other than medicine is smaller than the number of academic staff with doctoral degrees expected to retire annually during the next few years. This in itself underscores the push for a substantial increase in graduate studies, but the envisaged magnitude of this increase assumes an equally heavy demand of doctorates outside the higher education system.

105. On this, the signals are at best ambivalent. With regard to the public sector, there is great need for people with doctor's degree in the schools, to fill the posts of lecturer that are traditionally of great importance in the theoretical programmes of the upper secondary school. There are no clear indicators as to whether the economy at large needs an increased number of people with post-graduate qualifications, though some of our interlocutors from the private sector argued in favour of a growing number of scientists and engineers at this level. Others, however, claimed that the present economic situation limits the absorptive capacity of the labour market for such people, at least in the short term. Moreover, small wage differentials according to educational attainment tend to reinforce the demand for shorter studies at the expense of graduate education, the income reward for those with advanced degrees being considered to be much lower than in comparable European countries. An upgrading of the remuneration of doctoral candidates at universities may be necessary to attract more candidates at this level.

106. A similar ambivalence can be observed in relation to the overall demand for higher education by *field of study*. The signals coming from the employment system in this respect remain general and vague, particularly surprising for a system with such a long experience with higher education policies emphasising the professional orientation of degree courses. The government, on its side, makes no bones about its interest in expanding science and engineering. To a certain extent this choice is based on signals from parts of Swedish industry, particularly for an increased number of civil engineers, but it also seems to be a more general reflection of the widespread expectation in many industrialised countries that an expansion of these fields is essential to technological progress and economic competitiveness. Sweden, as previously noted, already has an exceptionally high proportion of science and engineering students and graduates, fields which grew more rapidly than others during the eighties. Expenditures on research in these fields have already been consistently high. Employers themselves seem to be more cautious in this respect, putting the emphasis on the expansion of short courses. Projections of future manpower needs are, of course, notoriously unreliable; but it is worthy of note that a projection made a few years ago (Background Report, p.91) indicated the need for an increase in higher education enrolment in order to satisfy the replenishment demand mostly in the culture and information sectors

and in the teaching, economic and social professions, with hardly any increase required to satisfy such demand in the science and technical professions.

107. The issues raised above show the complexity of the factors affecting decisions about the quantitative development of higher education in Sweden. To these must be added, as a final comment, the impact of *European integration* and of the employment prerequisites of the European labour market. They will be most immediately felt in areas where the study period was two years or less. Thus the government is already considering the lengthening of former two-year courses in nursing and other programmes in the health profession to three years in order to meet the formal requirements set in the E.C. standards. A number of University Colleges are planning a similar extension of their two-year programmes in such fields as engineering and social work in order to conform to the 1958 E.C. regulation under which degrees based on at least three years of study are the minimum academic qualification for highly qualified professions in Europe. It is inevitable that these requirements will affect the intake capacity of the Swedish higher education system and also add to its costs -- to which now we turn.

Costs, expenditures and financing

108. In relation to other countries, higher education in Sweden has been blessed with a more relaxed funding situation and has escaped the financial turmoil which other systems experienced during the eighties. From about the mid-eighties its resources have in fact been growing, in spite of a diminution in the overall educational budget. The priority which the present government has given to higher education will increase these resources further as reflected in the 1992/93 budgetary proposals. Expenditures for basic higher education are increased by 10.1 per cent, those for research and research training (not including external funding) by 9.6 per cent and those for study support by 3.7 per cent. It is unlikely, however, that even with this increase it will be possible to match the increase envisaged in the number of students deriving both from a larger number of new entrants and the extended length of study in some fields, as indicated above.

109. This disparity will be partly cushioned by the extraordinarily favourable *student/staff ratio* which is a characteristic of higher education in Sweden. The corresponding figures speak for themselves. There are altogether about 2,000 professors, 4,000 senior lecturers and 5,000 assistant lecturers at universities and university colleges, and about 1,000 teachers at local colleges. In addition, there are about 3,500 researchers and research assistants, and 1,000 junior research fellows, both of whom spend some of their time on teaching. With about 140,000 first degree students, about 60,000 students in single subject courses and less than 10,000 in advanced courses, the student/academic staff ratio in Sweden is one of the most favourable among all OECD countries -- even taking into consideration that about one-fifth of the academic staff is employed part-time. There is obviously sufficient elasticity in the system to accommodate at least part of the additional student intake. However, the academic lobby is quite strong in Sweden and could well resist any diminution in the advantages it has traditionally enjoyed.

110. A similar dilemma will be confronted in relation to the distribution of *expenditures between teaching and research*. Roughly equal during the eighties,

the share between initial education and research and graduate education has been skewed in favour of the latter at the beginning of the nineties, and it now stands at about 40 and 60 per cent respectively (including, for the latter, funds derived from sources other than the Ministry of Education). It is highly unlikely that a substantial increase in the number of students in initial programmes *and* of graduate students could be sustained without a reduction in other research expenditure. The alternative, of course, would be to raise the level of external funding for research, with all the dangers that such targeted research carries for the role and functions of universities and their dedication to the disinterested advancement of the frontiers of knowledge. The government itself intends to use money available under the Employee Investment Funds -- established under the previous government to ensure workers' participation in employers' profits, and abolished under the present government -- to support research, but it is as yet not clear to what precise uses these funds will be put.

111. The remaining alternative is to make students pay. This could be done directly, by introducing *tuition fees* or indirectly by reducing the level of *student aid*. There is no tradition in Sweden of charging tuition fees and any step in this direction would be strongly resisted by the well-organised student body and their parents. There are no indications that government is even considering this eventuality, which would, in any case, act as a disincentive to the expansion of student numbers. Government has instead opted for a redeployment within the educational budget envelope with a relative reduction of school expenditure and a reduction in absolute terms of adult education spending.

112. The *student-aid system* is currently under review and recommendations are expected to be made soon. Under it, students receive need-based financial support related to their future income prospects and irrespective of their parents' or partners' income. It is made up of about 30 per cent grant and 70 per cent loan of a sum which is generally viewed as adequate in meeting all of a student's living and study expenditures. The monthly allowance received by students is certainly impressive by international standards and its generosity is not disputed by the students themselves. What is at issue is the method of repayment of the loan. It carries an interest rate of 8.5 per cent and has to be paid back at the rate of 4 per cent of the student's annual income. As a consequence, repayment of these debts for a large number of students may spread over several decades. For many of them, unemployment or low income in the early years of their professional life drives the debt up to forbidding heights. So much so, that many young people think twice before embarking on higher education studies, others are forced to interrupt their studies for gainful employment, while others again choose to combine study with work. It is clear that the system needs to be rethought, taking into account experience in other countries. Our own guess is that such revision will affect the modalities of the operation of the system rather than the level of financial support it entails.

Access and admission to higher education

113. The present government's objective of expanding the quantity of higher education and at the same time improving its quality is reflected in the

changes introduced in the regulations and procedures governing access and admission to higher education institutions.

114. Four principal features can be identified as characteristic of the system which had prevailed during the previous two decades:

i) there was strict central planning of the numbers of student intake with a *numerus clausus* applying to all fields of study;

ii) admission regulations emphasised opportunities for adults;

iii) single subject courses were encouraged and served both as a sizeable open adult education sector in its own right and as an additional route to degree programmes for adults;

iv) admission regulations both mirrored and reinforced a structural pattern of the higher education system in which, on the one hand, quality differences between universities were considered marginal while, on the other, differences between fields of study were substantial -- some requiring a much higher level of school achievement than others, with corresponding effects on the streaming of upper secondary education.

115. Of these, the one which had the most far-reaching consequences on the physiognomy of the system -- and the one which attracted the most attention, both in Sweden and abroad -- has been the attention given to facilitating *adult enrolment*, leading to what many saw as the "adultification" of Swedish higher education. The movement reached its peak at the end of the seventies when the total number of new entrants to higher education 25 years and older was about 40 per cent. Most widely known, in this context, was the 25 (years of age) plus 5 (years of experience) scheme of the 1969 reform -- revised to 25 plus 4 in 1977, by which other students too could get a bonus for work experience. (It should be noted, however, that the proportion of new students admitted to regular degree programmes under the 25 plus 4 scheme remained always relatively small, at most 5 per cent of all new entrants to such programmes). It declined to less than 30 per cent in the 1980s -- still exceptionally high by European standards -- largely due to changes in admission rules introduced in 1982 and again in 1991 by which the weight of work experience was reduced in favour of applicants coming more-or-less directly from school. The scheme has been questioned in the discussion about changes in eligibility criteria being introduced by the new government, but it will in principle be maintained.

116. It is difficult to pass judgement on the effects which the large intake of adults over nearly two decades has had on Swedish higher education. At its inception, it was certainly seen as representing a radical step towards equality of opportunity. It contributed to bridging the educational generation gap, thereby helping to raise the level of educational attainment of the population of the country as a whole. This need has now been reduced because of the generalisation of upper secondary education from which new generations of adults have benefited. On the other hand, adult enrolment did hold back the flow of young entrants, many of them choosing work experience after completion of their secondary education in order to improve their chances for subsequent admission. The cohabitation of adults and young people within the same institution must have proved mutually beneficial. Its impact on the academic

potential of universities is more questionable, the interests and aptitudes of adults being primarily professional rather than academic or research-oriented.

117. Under the new admissions policy, eligibility will be generally based on completion of at least three years upper secondary education. Framework criteria for the selection of candidates, in which school grades and aptitude tests will continue to play a major role, will be set by government; but final decisions will be in the hands of individual universities which might also take into account other factors, such as special tests, other previous education, working life experience, etc. Special requirements for entry into certain fields will also be left to the individual institutions. New arrangements will be made for the overall co-ordination of admission procedures (formerly carried out by UHÄ), through a new service unit of voluntary inter-university co-operation. In any case, the individual university will always decide on the students it admits.

118. One possible consequence of this policy could be the greater importance, and controversy, which would be attached to the details of selection criteria and processes, particularly if study programmes and admission criteria diversify across the country as a result of reduced central co-ordination and increased competition between institutions. A related consequence will be to bring into even greater prominence problems of the *transition to higher education* from different types of upper secondary schools and programmes, hence forth the main source of new entrants.

119. In spite of the diminution in recent years in the total number of upper secondary school graduates -- from about 110,000 in the mid-eighties to about 95,000 in 1990/91, -- the proportion of the age cohort transferring directly to higher education remained constant throughout the decade at about 20 - 21 per cent. The vast majority come from 3/4 year theoretical upper secondary programmes, with the social sciences (including economics) in the lead, followed closely by the natural sciences; the humanities and 3-year technical programmes share an honourable third position. The small proportion coming from 2-year theoretical programmes was almost exclusively in the field of music while vocationally oriented programmes were hardly represented except for a small number in control and maintenance and in nursing. It remains to be seen whether this pattern will be affected by the upgrading of all vocational programmes or whether these will continue to be, in their extended form, essentially terminal in character leading directly to employment.

120. No doubt, the decision to increase the number of study places in higher education will provide additional access opportunities for qualified school leavers. But admission tensions will remain and these will increasingly revolve around the criteria which are set for the competition for entry. The new accent on academic competence, in a system in which diversity of provision and outcomes is a desirable objective, diminishes the value of school grades as a general yardstick of judging the quality of applicants. This is already reflected in the increased use which is made of a combination of such grades with test scores under the *Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test* (SweSAT). Applied for the first time in 1977 for applicants under the 25 plus 4 scheme, SweSAT (similar to the US Scholastic Aptitude Test, but broadened regarding the areas of competencies covered), has rapidly developed so that by 1991 scores under it became the regular admission route for about 40 per cent of the study places. The number of persons taking the test -- which is administered every semester

and can be taken by applicants as often as they like -- increased from about 10,000 to 120,000. It is most likely that it will become even more important in the future and it is subject to constant developmental work to improve its fairness and quality, particularly in order to reduce its inbuilt gender bias which at present seems to favour males.

121. We believe, however, that as the system diversifies the concern about improving and rewarding quality should lead to a more reinforced mix of admission criteria than one based exclusively on 60 per cent according to school grades and 40 per cent according to test scores. The search for a single general yardstick of quality may be counter-productive and scope must be allowed for a more empirical approach after a trial-and-error period. In this, we were encouraged to note recommendations being made that higher education institutions should provide *bridging courses* on a large scale for new entrants who find themselves facing difficulties in meeting the required standards of the regular courses. This approach suggests that students' choice of certain subject profiles and types of school at the upper secondary stage should not necessarily commit them to precise, specific disciplines and types of programme in higher education, but rather allow a substantial redistribution at the stage of admission to a higher education institution. Such a more flexible system would spread opportunities to a larger spectrum of students than one which emphasises a clear link between upper secondary education options and subsequent study or employment.

Institutional patterns in higher education

122. The Swedish system of higher education, as formally set up by the 1977 legislation, is variously described as "unitary", "comprehensive" and "integrated". It is made up of a number of institutions, all going by the name of "högskolan", but which in reality fall under the following fairly distinct categories: six universities; seven specialised higher education institutions with major research functions; nine other specialised institutions, notably in the fine arts; fifteen University Colleges; and forty local colleges, notably for training in the health professions. With the same basic rules for entry across all institutions, identical frameworks of goals and organisation, general transferability of credits and little difference in quality among institutions in each of the above categories, the characterisation of the system as having "structural uniformity" is quite appropriate. On the other hand, it must be recognised that a great deal of "functional differentiation" operates within the system, particularly in the location of post-graduate programmes and research facilities and in the duration and orientation of studies. Thus the system is in practice less "unitary" than, for example, the one that applies in Finland, where from the mid-seventies to the mid-eighties, higher education institutions moved towards equal length of all course programmes, the same main patterns of academic staff and the same research functions.

123. The 1977 reform was, of course, seminal in setting the structural development of the system. Its central dilemma was how to avoid that institutional differentiation led to a rigid "binary" structure. This was pursued partly through institutional mergers and partly through purposeful and extensive overlap in the provision of course programmes and research functions. Thus, universities and equivalent specialised institutions, which had the

quasi-monopoly of study programmes requiring three or more years and of all post-graduate programmes, were encouraged to set up a number of shorter programmes (less than three years) which was the preserve of university colleges. Conversely, a number of three-year or longer initial degree programmes were established within university colleges: more than one-third of their students (excluding those enrolled in single subject courses) are actually enrolled in such programmes. Similarly, though to a lesser extent, university colleges were allowed to establish applied research activities, normally the exclusive prerogative of universities and specialised research-oriented institutions.

124. There are also various cases of co-operation between university colleges and universities in research projects and the supervision of doctoral candidates, as there are examples of research in fields traditionally only taught in short courses, for example social work.

125. This permeability between the two sectors is perhaps best illustrated by examples of curricular co-operation in the engineering field: some university colleges offer the first two years of study for engineering course programmes lasting four to four-and-a-half years. This is done in co-operation with a technical university which is responsible for the admission of students and to which these students transfer after their first two years for the rest of their course and, eventually, the award of the degree. We were told by representatives of the respective institutions involved in this co-operation that the students taught during the first two years at the university colleges were subsequently equally successful as those taught from the beginning at the technical universities -- which points to a parity of teaching quality between the two types of institution. We were also made aware, however, that standards of quality do differ widely among the wide range of university colleges across the country, in contrast to the homogeneity which applies to all six universities. Our impression was that only about four to six among the university colleges could be considered as having succeeded in reaching university-level quality standards.

126. It is against the above background that the structural impact of recent developments and changes in policy has to be considered. It is clear that there will be growing pressure on the part of at least some university colleges for their formal upgrading, partly encouraged by the planning targets set by the previous government, and confirmed by the present one, that all university college teachers (except those in the fine arts) should hold doctorate degrees. This aspiration varies enormously among university colleges. Some would simply like to retain their distinctive status, but enlarge their functions to include university-type of activity, e.g. a bigger role in research and the establishment of advanced courses. Others would strive to achieve university status, either through linkages or mergers with existing universities or through the creation of networks with other university colleges which would then be upgraded to a university. The debate on this is often linked to considerations relating to a more equitable geographical distribution of university location in Sweden.

127. It is also clear, on the other hand, that no substantial changes to the existing institutional pattern can be discerned in the intentions of the new government. True, the unitary structure is symbolically decried by re-emphasising the distinct names of "universitet" and "högskola", but joint

legislation and ordinances for the two types will be maintained. The substantive criticism which is made of the 1977 reform applies to the rigid structure of course programmes and of internal university organisation and decision-making rather than to the unitary structure of the system as such. The proposals in the Memorandum of January 1992 indicate more often a growing overlap of functions than a more clear-cut distinction between the two types of institution. This line is consistent with the government's emphasis on competition between institutions as a stimulus to improving quality. Initiatives on the part of individual university colleges would certainly be discouraged under a system which limited their roles and functions within clearly delineated typologies.

128. The main thrust of the new government's higher education policy is towards increased diversity within the universities as well as the university colleges and increased flexibility for all higher education institutions in determining curricula, research programmes, personnel matters, etc., -- a move which is generally welcomed by academics and other higher education representatives. A number of them, however, expressed concern at the possible effects which the competitive model could have in fostering an institutional loyalty among the academic profession at the expense of their cosmopolitan outlook, while others continue to see an advantage in maintaining a more-or-less equal quality among all universities.

129. Be that as it may, we assume that government cannot merely maintain a passive stand towards the development of the institutional pattern of the Swedish higher education system in the light of the pressures outlined above. Sooner or later decisions will have to be taken and perhaps the cutting edge for such decisions will be provided by changes in the articulation of study programmes, which we discuss below.

Study programmes

130. It would be useful to look first at the main characteristics of Swedish study programmes as they developed during the seventies and eighties.

131. To a large extent, study programmes were centrally regulated. Over one hundred so-called "general programmes", covering 96 per cent of the degrees awarded, were prescribed in fair detail. (Other "local" and "individual" programmes, as well as the single subject courses, played only a marginal role in the degree-awarding process). Their length of study varies according to the field. There are no clear stages, as they exist in other countries, defining a bachelor's or a master's degree. Rather degrees in fields requiring three or three-and-a-half years of study are translated as bachelors and those requiring four years or more as masters; but both of them qualify for doctoral studies. A *licentiate* degree -- halfway between an initial degree and a doctoral degree -- was phased out during the seventies, but was reintroduced in the eighties, as already mentioned.

132. Under the 1977 law, all general course programmes had to be profesionally-oriented. They were grouped under five professional sectors: technical; administrative; economic and social; health; educational; culture and information. This principle was relaxed in the mid-eighties, whereby studies in humanities, social sciences and natural sciences could lead

to a degree -- the "fil.kand" -- without direct links to a specific career as teacher, administrator, etc.

133. A distinctive feature of the Swedish study programmes is the large number of "*single subject courses*" provided by universities. About 30 per cent of Swedish students are enrolled in these courses, comprising a study load of about five to forty weeks, the latter being equivalent to one year's full study. They are single non-degree units, but students may also combine single courses into a degree. We were also informed that about 5 per cent of graduates had been admitted to degree programmes not through the usual admission procedures, but via completion of one or more single subject courses.

134. Finally, a four-year technical course was provided in upper secondary schools, completion of which led to a qualification formally recognised to be that of an applied engineer and accepted as the equivalent of a one to two year programme at university colleges. However, a number of students in this course transferred to an institution of higher education on completion of their third year. It was decided in 1991 that as from the following year (1992) upper secondary schools should cease to provide a fourth year in technical programmes. The final year of such programmes was extended to a two-year course and transferred to institutions of higher education, though frequently offered at separate places and serviced by staff having previously been upper secondary school teachers.

135. As noted earlier, it can be assumed that a substantial part of short course programmes in Swedish higher education will be eventually extended to three years in order to meet E.C. regulations concerning the recognition of professional qualifications. On the other hand, the new government has indicated its intention to restructure all initial programmes into three degree categories: a University College Degree, after at least one-and-a-half years; a Bachelor's Degree, after three years; and a Master's Degree, after at least four years. An ordinance will be eventually issued which will indicate clearly which institutions can confer in what areas each of these degrees. This seems to imply that government does not envisage that all course programmes in higher education should be extended to a minimum of three years.

136. Decisions in this matter will not be made before the public debate on the January 1992 Memorandum is completed. This also applies to other important changes envisaged in the Memorandum. These changes relate to: a) greater flexibility for institutions to decide how many students are to be admitted annually to each degree programme, as against the previous practices whereby such numbers were precisely prescribed centrally; b) similar flexibility as regards admission criteria, as already indicated; c) reduction in the number of the previously highly regulated general programmes and more leeway for individual institutions to offer specific programme profiles and for the students to choose among courses offered; d) reinforcement of the academic versus the professional component of degree courses, so that degrees in traditionally non-professionally oriented fields can be obtained if at least one-and-a-half years of the courses taken were focused on one specific discipline. In addition, the alternative model which has been introduced for teachers -- a professional course following completion of academic study -- serves the same principle and further improves the options of the students.

137. We noted during our visit that the virtue of increasing the variety of course programmes is universally recognised in Sweden. A trend in this direction was already visible from the mid-eighties onwards and the new government's speeding up of it is generally welcomed by all the stakeholders within the higher education system. Surprisingly, little concern was voiced about the impact of curricula de-regulation on the academic versus professional emphasis of courses. (The only adverse comment came from the Workers' Union -- LO -- who feared that these changes would undermine the professional relevance of studies and most likely lead to an increase in graduate unemployment). Such concerns as we heard related to what some people saw as an inevitable tension between the push for quality -- for which tight frames are more likely to be set -- on the one hand, and the emphasis on diversity and choice, on the other. In this respect, the discontinuation of the "25 plus 4" admission scheme was quoted as contradicting the objective of stimulating institutional independence, diversity and competition, and as a possible signal that further tight quality frameworks might be set.

138. One specific issue which we believe will come up for increased attention concerns the links between short-cycle programmes and university course programmes. If a substantial proportion of the former will be extended to three years, questions of articulation and transfer will arise in relation to university degree programmes in the same fields, notably economics and engineering. Universities, in particular, will need to reconsider the extent of prior study they recognise as part of their degree programme. And, as already indicated, a number of university colleges themselves are planning to provide advanced courses leading to the equivalent of the initial university degree, translated as master's. One is tempted to ask to what extent the present "overlap" system can cope with these complexities or whether alternative institutional solutions could not be envisaged.

Teaching and learning in higher education

139. Changes in the content, organisation and structure of study programmes, with which we have dealt above, is only one aspect of the overall concern with the quality of undergraduate studies, a concern which Sweden shares with many other countries. Another, and no less important, aspect has to do with the quality of the teaching and learning process itself, on which we now wish to offer a few comments.

140. At the outset, it should be pointed out that the status of teaching and learning in the Swedish system of higher education is very much conditioned by the primacy which this system has traditionally attached to the role of research -- in line with other countries influenced by the Humboldtian tradition. That Sweden, unlike most other countries, has been able to maintain a very favourable student/academic staff ratio, even during the period of massive expansion in student numbers, meant that the time available for research did not get reduced. Strong emphasis on research at universities, particularly in science and engineering, has consistently been the policy of successive governments. The percentage of research-related expenditure of institutions of higher education increased from just over 50 per cent of their budgets at the beginning of the eighties to just over 60 per cent at the end of that decade. This is a very high figure by any international standard. (In Germany, for example, the corresponding figure is estimated at about 33

per cent of general expenditure and still less than 50 per cent if external resources are included). Academic staff in Sweden seem to favour an even stronger share of research in their own work; an UHÄ survey in 1991 showed that the actual time spent on teaching and related activities was 41 per cent, which respondents wished to see reduced to 34 per cent, whereas 42 per cent was actually spent on research and related activities, which they wished to see increased to 50 per cent on average.

141. The belief that the instructional and research functions of institutions of higher education are mutually reinforcing is ingrained in all systems. But rarely is this interpreted as applying to all sectors of higher education -- the universities being particularly privileged in this respect -- or to all categories of staff. Sweden is no exception to this. Firstly, and as already pointed out, research remains highly concentrated in universities and similar specialised institutions and there is a continuous debate as to whether the research function of university colleges should be increased or not. The 1977 reform did envisage an extension of research to fields and institutions traditionally viewed as not research-oriented. This did not materialise to the extent expected: staff at university colleges reported in 1991 that on average they spend only one-tenth of their working time on research and research-related activities.

142. Secondly, within universities and similar institutions, teaching and research coexist, but with little osmosis between them, as reflected in the distribution of teaching tasks among different categories of staff. There is, in fact, a fairly sharp divide in this respect between senior lecturers and assistant lecturers, on the one hand, and professors and specific research staff, on the other. Whereas the former spend respectively about half and more than half of their time on teaching and related activities, the latter spend only one-sixth and one-ninth respectively of their time in this area. This polarisation of functions has at least two important implications: a) the majority of academic staff in universities have a substantial workload related to teaching, whereas careers promotion depends primarily on research output; b) Swedish professors are less involved in teaching first degree students than their counterparts in most of the other OECD countries.

143. Many of the people we spoke with in Sweden were in favour of attenuating this sharp demarcation between teaching and research. They believe that the quality of teaching would thereby improve and that teachers would be less frustrated or less inclined to neglect their teaching tasks in order to find the minimum time which would enable them to produce meaningful research results essential to their career prospects. We share this view and were encouraged to hear that professors nowadays seem to show increasing interest in teaching first degree courses if only to ensure a good supply of potential research students.

144. We wish by no means to give the impression that the dominance of the research interest means that the quality of teaching and learning is neglected. We were, in fact, struck by the seriousness of the debate and efforts for the improvement of higher education teaching which we observed during our visit. Swedish lecturers, even if they complain about few research opportunities, are highly committed to their teaching tasks. Relations between teachers and students seem to be relaxed, facilitated by small student/staff ratios -- even though, as recorded in the Background report, criticisms are often heard of

"parts of the system ... being too school-like in their pedagogical methods and structuring of the subject-matter" and not providing sufficient stimulus for student initiatives and their active participation in such matters as choice of study areas, independent work and the expression of individual viewpoints. A survey undertaken in the mid-eighties of the views of Swedish students who had spent some time abroad -- particularly in the US, the UK and Germany -- provided comparative confirmation of this judgement.

145. A second group of concerns, also briefly mentioned in the Background Report, concerns the extended duration of studies (estimated in most fields at between 20 and 50 per cent of the nominally required time) and the relatively large number of drop-outs, amounting to about one-third of all those aiming at completing a degree course. These figures are probably exaggerated. For example, estimates made by UHÄ show that the inordinately extended duration of studies derives from a calculation of the gross time-span between initial enrolment and completion of study; if one calculates the "net" time, i.e. the amount of time during this period actually spent in study, the norm is nearer to the nominally required duration.

146. To consider these and other related issues -- including ways by which pedagogical merits could be better taken into consideration in decisions on filling advanced academic positions -- the government set up in 1989 a special *Commission on Teaching Within Higher Education*. It presented its final report in January 1992 under the title "*Freedom, Responsibility and Competence*", i.e. more or less concurrently with the publication of the new government's Memorandum on Higher Education. The Commission's recommendations for the improvement of teaching are, therefore, likely to be overshadowed by the broader debate on higher education policy stimulated by the government's Memorandum with its accent on the steering of the system and its overall pattern.

147. Whatever their eventual fate, the Commission's recommendations are worthy of note. They advocate, in particular, close attention to new student entrants, including better guidance and counselling for secondary school students and better contacts between schools and universities; the need for basic and continuing pedagogical training for university teachers; various measures of systematising the assessment of teaching qualifications, such as those experimented with at the University of Gotenburg; and new ways of regular evaluation of resources, processes and outcomes of teaching, such as the experimented evaluation projects in economics and engineering suggested by UHÄ. To ensure that continuing attention should be given to these matters, the Commission finally recommended the setting up of an authority "which could fill the same function for undergraduate education as research councils do for research and post-graduate education". This recommendation led directly to the setting up, in June 1990, of the "Council for the Renewal of Undergraduate Education" for which government provided funds for a three-year trial period. The aim of the Council is "to promote the development of undergraduate education by awarding grants for experimental projects which cannot, and should not, be funded through ordinary channels. Also to collect and disseminate information on completed, current and planned projects of a fundamental and innovative nature concerning undergraduate education in Sweden and abroad".

148. Not the least value of the work of the Commission was the stimulus it gave, through its deliberations, surveys and the promotion of experimentation,

to an already lively debate in Sweden on the quality of teaching and undergraduate education and the active support of innovative approaches in these areas. We saw many examples of this during our visits to universities, some more systematic than others, some based on individual or group initiatives, but all imbued with a clear sense of institutional purpose directed at enhancing the teaching function. It is to be hoped that the lead position which Sweden has thus acquired in this field, and which owes much to central impetus, will be sustained by individual higher education institutions under the more decentralised arrangements within which they will operate in the future.

New international challenges

149. Confronting the challenges of the new international context is one of the most manifest preoccupations of educational, particularly higher educational, policy in Sweden today; one is almost tempted to say it is becoming an obsession. To a foreign observer, this comes somewhat as a surprise, for Sweden appears to be extraordinarily well prepared to cope with the growing degree of country interdependence and interactions, economic as well as cultural. There is hardly any other country in Europe where a foreign language is so well-mastered across most segments of the population. (English is mandatory as from the fourth form of schooling and will be mandatory even for all vocational types of upper secondary education). Similarly, no other European country ensures the same extent of home language instruction and provision of bilingual classes for children whose mother-tongue is other than Swedish, now standing at about 10 per cent of the age group. Moreover, in pursuing its long-standing policy of neutrality Sweden was internationally recognised as in no way being isolationist, but rather as fostering active co-operation with all parts of the world in the political, economic and social domains. And Swedes themselves have tended to believe in their missionary role as international leaders in many areas. Yet, and somewhat paradoxically, they have always been sensitive to outside opinion of themselves and to foreign judgement on their achievements.

150. It was only natural that a country with a population of about eight million, with a very sophisticated export-based economy, would see the need for increased international co-operation going beyond its intensified links with its Nordic neighbours in such matters as research, student exchange and recognition of educational credentials, exemplified among others, by the NORDPLUS co-operative programme. The gradual process of integration of the European Community added stronger pressures on Sweden for re-arranging its international ties. The debate on this was, in particular, fuelled by moves on the part of the E.C. towards greater co-operation in matters of higher education. Programmes such as ERASMUS and COMETT gained rapid and widespread attention. Participation in E.C. research programmes began as early as 1986, extending to other major educational programmes as from 1992. Political changes in Eastern Europe, by removing the prime rationale of political neutrality, accelerated this shift towards the European Community while, at the same time, they presented Sweden with new opportunities of actively contributing to a new political order among central and northern European countries.

151. We noted that on the whole, educational leaders in Sweden accept the challenge of this changed international context with pondered equanimity, confident that the skills and attitudes of the population can cope. But we also noted some misgivings deriving from fears in certain quarters of Sweden losing some of its autonomy and identity and thereby becoming marginalised in a broader European merger.

152. *Firstly*, there is a strong feeling in Sweden that European integration is linked to increasing pressures for the *convergence of educational systems*. The Background Report states, for example, that some training programmes have to be longer in order to meet E.C. standards. The examples mentioned -- training for nurses and midwives -- imply that the pressure for harmonisation will remain relatively limited. Others fear, however, that this is just the tip of the iceberg, leading to a spiral of upgrading of credentials in many areas and the extension of most short-cycle higher education programmes to three or four years, as discussed above. Irrespective of the impact which such a move could have on the physiognomy of higher education institutions, e.g., opportunities for the upgrading of university colleges, there was an emotional underpinning of the danger of Swedish trained personnel becoming an insignificant two to three per cent component of a larger economic, political and social conglomerate rather than an entity of its own.

153. Secondly, Swedish *co-operation in research* has traditionally leaned heavily towards the US. A shift towards European co-operation in this area is not in all cases viewed as a gain. Moreover, concerns were expressed that the heavy costs involved in contributing to EC-sponsored research projects might lead to a reduction of national research expenditures and reduced autonomy in setting research priorities.

154. A third group of problems relate to *student exchange*, a matter of rapidly growing interest in Sweden, going back to the stimulus provided under the "internationalisation" programme funded by the government since the seventies. Temporary study abroad has been rapidly rising, strongly reinforced by the decision that student scholarships can also be used for such purposes. It was reported to us that 10-15,000 Swedish students avail themselves of this opportunity now. In this respect, the ERASMUS programme was seen by many as an important additional incentive to student exchange. On the other hand, the discriminatory regulations set by EC for participation in the programme (EFTA countries can only join if at least two EC countries are involved in each single co-operative programme) and the relatively small funds available by the EC in comparison to the costs borne by governments, universities and the students themselves, together with the complex bureaucratic procedures under which the programme operates, led many people to the belief that individual student mobility would be preferable to student exchange in the framework of co-operation networks. To this must be added the difficulties of achieving reciprocity, Swedish being a language hardly learned outside the Nordic countries. It is doubtful that current efforts made by a number of universities to foster a Swedish component in the study courses of foreign students can succeed in redressing the balance. The alternative would be to use English as the language of instruction and this possibility is actually realised or being considered for many courses.

155. Finally, the changing international context has substantial implications for the *regional balance* in Sweden. The move towards EC integration will no

doubt further stimulate the economy in southern Sweden and thus further accentuate its relative advantage vis-à-vis the north, already heavily subsidised. On the other hand, the political changes in the east might provide special opportunities for the central and northern parts of Sweden, in which higher education institutions might well play a leading role. Universities in the north -- if Umea can be called the north -- are already envisaging a new such role covering co-operation with the Baltic region and even extending to Canada. It is thus quite probable that the regional distribution of higher education facilities will come up for renewed discussion in Sweden under the impact of the changed international position of the country.

156. All in all, the challenge facing Swedish higher education in its new international context is one of how to meet the imperative needs which arise from the move towards integration with the European Community without, at the same time, undermining its capacity to relate to the emerging new Europe, the United States and the rest of the world. It is a formidable challenge, not unique to Sweden, in which the attitude of the academic community and initiatives by individual institutions will probably play a more determinant role than Government itself can.

Governance of higher education

157. Traditionally, Swedish higher education tends to be viewed as being planned and steered to a substantial extent by the central government. One should bear in mind, however, that governmental supervision of Swedish higher education institutions was in many respects less direct than in some other OECD countries with a strong tradition of central funding of most higher education. It should also be noted that:

a) There were historically very few conflicts between academia and the State in Sweden. Throughout the centuries, cases of governmental action viewed as substantial interference in academic matters were very exceptional, e.g. in appointing professors not proposed by the respective university committees. On the whole, the academic corps appears to have been closely allied with the State administration and the official world. It is true, nonetheless, that attempts to increase State control were made evident during times of ambitious social change.

b) The National Board of Universities and Colleges -- with its three-fold function of supervision and planning, spokesman for higher education needs and interests vis-à-vis government and parliament, and provision of various services and research -- served as a "buffer" agency between central government and the universities.

c) The 1977 reform aimed at a mix of centralisation and decentralisation. It favoured decentralised management in terms of co-ordination of study programmes and of the responsibilities of individual higher education institutions for day-to-day activities, while, at the same time, central planning became stronger as regards quantitative developments, notably the number of students to be admitted, and curricula. Though decentralisation in management terms was generally hailed by universities as a liberating move, other

aspects of State control and detailed steering continued to be viewed as too far-reaching. In addition, there was criticism of the complex machinery set up for the administration of the system through the six regional boards, study programme committees, etc. Two elements of these decision-making patterns were particularly criticised: the multitude of levels of co-ordination, negotiation and decision, and the clear split of decision-making powers as between teaching and research. The abolition of the regional boards in the late eighties and other measures to alleviate the weight of central control over planning, funding and curricula went a long way towards meeting this criticism.

158. The policy enunciated by the new government aims at:

- reducing the central co-ordination of the system by giving increased freedom to individual institutions on qualitative, curricula and similar matters;
- reducing the governmental supervision of university administration;
- strengthening the position of the local boards and boards of individual institutions;
- strengthening the management capacities within institutions as a whole and within individual departments;
- increasing the role of evaluation as an information basis for decision-making in higher education.

159. We were not in a position to pursue in detail all the implications of the envisaged changes. We focus our comments, therefore, on five issues which were most frequently raised in our discussions during our visit. These are:

- the consequence of the abolition of the Board of Universities and Colleges;
- the proposal to transform some universities into "foundations";
- changes in the composition of higher education boards and committees;
- the increased role of evaluation;
- the changing influence of the government in higher education.

a) Abolition of the Board of Universities and Colleges (UHÄ)

160. The Swedish National Board of Universities and Colleges was a symbol both of relatively rational and well-prepared decision-making and of heavy emphasis on central planning in higher education. Although its representatives are certainly right in claiming credit for themselves for having suggested less tight regulations and increased decentralisation, UHÄ continued to be viewed as a symbol of centralisation. It is not surprising, therefore, that one of the first decisions of the new Government in the area of higher education was the

abolition of UHÄ by summer 1992 -- a decision which has met with widespread approval on the part of the higher education community, regarded as an essential step in the process of decentralisation.

161. It is obvious that some of the prior functions of UHÄ will become obsolete: the need for a "buffer" role diminishes in a situation in which government takes a stronger stand in setting the aims of higher education and in controlling its outputs while relegating administrative and managerial responsibilities to the institutions themselves. Some of the other functions will need to be incorporated in the Ministry of Education and/or in the two new agencies that have now been set up: a service unit which, among others, could deal with the admissions processes; and an agency to co-ordinate evaluation. Detailed arrangements have still to be worked out, but at least two gaps remain to be filled.

162. Firstly, UHÄ was the repository of professional expertise in higher education planning and administration. This function will now have to be taken over by the Ministry and the individual institutions of higher education. It remains to be seen whether in fact the Ministry and the university rectors can upgrade their potential for expert knowledge in this area by the additional staff recruitted for these purposes. Secondly, Sweden is internationally known for having stimulated research on higher education, both in a theoretically fruitful and practically useful way. Thanks to the work of the R & D Unit of UHÄ, research on higher education is more advanced than in most other European countries. It will be difficult to find a new home for this Unit which is generally recognised for the effectiveness of its work in striking a balance between academic depth and relevance to decision-making.

b) Privatisation of Higher Education

163. One of the most spectacular -- and perhaps the most controversial -- proposals of the new government is to privatise a few institutions of higher education, by transforming them into "foundations". The suggestion is that institutions interested in this idea should provisionally negotiate possible terms and modes and operation prior to legislative proposals being put to parliament. (There is at present only one private university in Sweden, the Stockholm School of Economics. It has its own endowments and the government provides grants for a fixed number of students in initial programmes and in graduate study. This amounts to about one-third of its income. It derives substantial additional income by providing advanced courses for managers and also raises funds for research).

164. We had the opportunity to meet the rectors and other representatives of the very small number of institutions who had expressed interest in the government's proposal. They all considered privatisation feasible and meaningful, for the entrepreneurial challenge it would offer to their institutions and the reduction of regulatory supervision by government. None of them, however, anticipated that they would not continue, under their new status, not to raise tuition fees from students enrolled in studies towards a first degree. But they all expected that transformation into a foundation would enable their institution to gain substantial income for functions other than teaching degree programmes and conducting basic research.

165. Clearly, part of their motivation derived from dissatisfaction with some of the current conditions of higher education. In this respect, particular reference was made to the extraordinarily slow and unpredictable activity of the national agency in charge of buildings which hindered the physical development of universities and did not give them the necessary flexibility of adapting construction to their perceived needs. But beyond this, we detected a hidden agenda behind their motivation. The speculation was that, exploiting the government's interest in demonstrating rapid success of its privatisation initiative, they could negotiate favourable conditions, particularly with regard to the size of the initial foundation capital, which would ensure for their institutions advantageous long-term funding not subject to the vicissitudes of the level of funding available to governmental universities. If we can speculate on our side, the success of the government's initiative will hinge on finding the considerable sums of foundation capital which will satisfy the ambitions of the few institutions in question.

c) The composition of boards and committees

166. The new government is in favour of strengthening the management capacities of institutions of higher education mostly through giving the rectors and deans a stronger say *vis-à-vis* the boards and the staff, and in addition a stronger role for the academic staff in the boards and committees. The latter is consistent with the ministry's view that quality in higher education is the uppermost consideration, as against the concern of previous governments in articulating higher education according to the needs of the employment system.

167. The government, thus, is in favour of a weaker position of representatives of public interest groups, as well as of non-academic staff on the boards. It also wishes to diminish the national regulation concerning student representation. It was interesting to note, however, that in all our meetings with rectors, student representatives were invited to take part in the discussion; and the rectors themselves went out of their way to stress that they were in favour of keeping students well represented in institutional decision-making. Many of them, in fact, pointed out that students in committees play a more constructive role in the search of common interests than the academic staff, many of whom tend to focus exclusively on the needs and interests of their specific disciplines. We saw no evidence of a preoccupation on the part of institutional leaders with "student power". On the contrary, student participation was seen as preventing unnecessary confrontations leading to crises in the internal lives of institutions. It remains to be seen, as some experts predict, whether student participation in decision-making bodies will be phased out in the implementation of the government's proposals.

d) Evaluation

168. Traditionally, quality in higher education was supposed to be reinforced through rigorous standards in awarding doctoral degrees, in filling positions and granting promotion and in awarding research funds beyond the basic funding within the university budget. In all these instances, external peers played an important role. "Everybody peer-reviewed everybody", as was pointed out in our conversations. There was no tradition in Sweden of regular assessment of teaching or research of individual departments. Funding underscored the willingness of ensuring more or less the same quality at all higher education

institutions rather than promising grand gains and threatening substantial losses of resources for the individual department or institution in comparison to their fellow departments or institutions.

169. Since the late eighties, however, substantial efforts have been undertaken in Sweden towards introducing more systematic ways of evaluation. UHÄ played a leading role in promoting experiments in this respect. Experiments went concurrently in various directions: search for standardised performance indicators, peer-reviews of departments, self-evaluation of processes and outcomes, including the establishment of regular modes of reporting activities and outcomes (as, for example, the reports on the teaching activities of individual staff members, already mentioned). Two aspects of these experiments are worthy of note in international comparison: i) efforts at strengthening the role of teaching in the assessment of staff, departments and institutions; ii) a strong emphasis on self-evaluation at the level of individual departments in order to stimulate improvement from below rather than linking it to differential resource allocation from above.

170. The new government intends to elevate evaluation to a key component of the steering of higher education institutions. Institutions should compete for quality, whereby the results of evaluation should form the basis for differential rewards and thus create an incentive system. In the words of Minister Unckel, in his introduction to the January 1992 Memorandum:

> Universities and university colleges possessing greater independence must be assured such working conditions that the competition between them becomes vital. Freedom without incentives for creative competition could otherwise run the risk of leading to the opposite of good result. This point of view leads to the evaluation of the activities of the universities and university colleges -- and not least with respect to making the results of the evaluation known. Good quality shall be rewarded. Inadequate quality shall not be permitted to continue undisturbed.

171. The Memorandum lists a number of proposals on how evaluation will be organised. A variety of professional bodies should be involved in the process. At national level, a secretariat consisting of distinguished professors and supported by a small office should commission evaluation studies and make their results available to the public. There should be a regular description of changes in the system through the use of indicators and other measures. In addition, individual institutions should undertake a more differentiated evaluation themselves.

172. Admittedly, these proposals are couched in general terms and their detailed implications have not yet been worked out -- at least at the time of our visit. Doing so would involve consideration of the many technicalities surrounding the elaboration of any evaluation system -- for example the relationship of evaluation to teaching/learning and research -- but also of a number of fundamental issues, such as:

- the links between national evaluation and institutional self-evaluation;

-- the time-span between evaluation and the application of resource allocation, and thus the option between immediate sanctioning versus allowing educational institutions themselves opportunities for improvement prior to sanctions;

-- the extent to which the criteria for evaluation create pressures for homogeneous goals; what mechanisms can be found to encourage diversity of goals and evaluation of their respective results;

-- the extent to which evaluation will address outcomes only, or also conditions and processes which explain outcomes and suggest remedial measures;

-- the extent to which evaluation "from above" is a substitute for, compatible with, or reinforcing of self-evaluation;

-- the extent to which government can play an active role in setting aims for higher education, thereby determining the criteria of evaluation and setting frameworks for procedures.

173. We suggest that these are some of the complex issues which deserve close attention by government as it sets out its policy of promoting evaluation to a key element in the steering of the higher education system.

e) The changing influence of the government

174. It is clear that the policy of the new government will change the pattern of relationships between government and the higher education system and its institutions. What is not yet clear is the final shape which these relationships will take and, in particular, in what ways and in what areas the influence of government will either increase or diminish.

175. Greater independence for individual institutions is one of the corner-stones of government policy. According to the 1992 Memorandum, increased independence should apply to the organisation of studies, education options offered to students, the recruitment of students, the establishment of professorships and the appointment of professors, institutional organisation and the disposal of financial resources and grants. Government decisions will be made through a higher education law, a higher education ordinance and the setting of principles for the dimensioning and allocation of resources. Thus the government role will focus on steering legislative processes and setting principles for resource allocation rather than in administrative supervision. It remains to be seen how this role will work out in practice, implying as it does being restricted to very broad frameworks in some areas while extending to the stipulation of details in others.

176. There are also different interpretations regarding decentralisation in higher education, on which government is rather silent. Some of our interlocutors expressed fears about an increased centralism, with government wishing to play a stronger role in determining membership on the university boards and in the nomination of rectors. The same ambiguity exists with regard to the links between an "internal" quality market in higher education and the demands of society, and in particular, what role will be reserved for negotiations with representatives of the employment system. Equally, there are

different views as to what "independence" means: many feel that reduced procedural regulation and supervision does not necessarily mean increased independence; it might, for example, lead to a strengthening of the university administration at the expense of academic autonomy. At another level, the increased independence which individual university departments will acquire might well lead, in some cases, to decisions to split off from their mother institution, resulting in some kind of "balkanisation" for these institutions. Finally, and as already mentioned, the abolition of UHÄ might lead to some of the functions formerly delegated to it being taken over by the Ministry itself.

177. No doubt, many of these issues will surface in the debate which has been launched by the publication of the government Memorandum. The higher education community in Sweden, and in other countries, will watch with interest the results of this consultation and government's decisions thereon.

IV. SUMMARY AND ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

178. We have endeavoured, in this report, to provide an informed commentary on what appear to us to be the major features of the educational policy scene in Sweden, at least as we perceived them at the time of our visit in the last half of March 1992. Throughout this commentary we have raised a number of questions -- some more direct than others, some of a factual nature (for which the information may have become available in the meantime), others pertaining to the rationale and intentions behind aspects of present policies, and others again designed to elucidate the nature and possible consequences of specific measures in the pursuit of these policies. These questions, we believe, raise problems enough to nourish a protracted debate well beyond the specific scope of the present review exercise. This is a tribute to the richness of the Swedish educational experience and the stimulus it continues to provide in the international debate on educational policy developments.

179. For the present discussion, rather than list, or even summarise, the detailed questions raised in our report, we have identified four general themes which could better serve the purposes of an agenda, and which roughly reflect the structure of the report itself. They are:

a) the policy-making process: its nature, objectives and instruments and their political underpinnings;

b) impact on schools;

c) the uncertain future of adult education;

d) the reshaping of higher education.

Under each of these themes a number of *indicative* issues are identified to serve as a starting point for the discussions. They by no means cover the full range of issues raised in the respective sections of the report.

180. Before embarking on a discussion of these themes, two preliminary considerations need to be noted. Firstly, we made an effort in our analysis of the problems to relate them as far as possible to their historical antecedents. In a number of areas, in fact, current policies represent a continuation and extension of trends and moves initiated in earlier periods. In other areas, however, the break with the past has been very radical. Inevitably, the questions are predominantly addressed to those aspects of policy which are identified within the present government.

181. Secondly, and related to the above, our report makes it clear that these new policies are in many vital respects still in the process of being elaborated. Further decisions in this direction will no doubt have been made since our visit to Sweden and the completion of our report (July 1992), which

may already provide answers to the speculative nature of some of our questions. We expect, therefore, that an essential prerequisite to the discussion would be an opportunity for our Swedish interlocutors to provide information on the most recent developments in relation to the issues under consideration. The same applies to a number of other questions designed to probe the *intentions* of the Swedish authorities behind some of their policy initiatives.

a) Policy-making

182. We have dealt with the issues which arise under this heading in Section I of our report, indicating that they cover both the content/objectives of policies and the style of policy-making. These are matters on which the present government has very clearly expressed views deriving largely from political ideology.

183. It would be useful to begin the discussion with an elaboration of this ideological rationale behind policy, in particular, the application of the market concepts of *choice and competition* to the specific circumstances of the Swedish educational system and of Swedish society more generally. How does the search for *diversity*, encouraged by decentralisation and deregulation, and considered as desirable in its own right, contribute to improving *quality*; and how both together can be reconciled to: i) ensuring nationally-desired standards; b) sustain the objective of *equality* among social groups and geographical regions? Are *evaluation* and *differentiated resource allocation* sufficient instruments in enabling government to steer the performance of the system, and can such steering in effect be meaningful in the absence of a *vision* for the longer-term development of education, on which government at present seems to be agnostic?

184. A second group of questions concerns the *style* and *organisation* of policy-making. In particular, what, if any, measures are envisaged to:

i) improve the level of communication between the Ministry and Central agencies, on the one hand, and the municipalities and institutional leaders, on the other? The lack of clarity as to the intentions behind Ministerial pronouncements and decisions leads to unnecessary confusion and speculation on the part of those involved in their implementation;

ii) ensure adequate, professionally-based analytical and planning capacity within the Ministry and its agencies, as a basis for more visibly justifiable decision-making and the setting of priorities?

iii) reinforce co-ordination within the Ministry itself, particularly as between secondary schools policies and higher education policy, and between the Ministry and other sectors of policy, particularly the employment sector?

b) Impact on Schools

185. Many of the questions posed above find their practical echo at the level of the schools and this discussion will inevitably overflow into this theme. Recognising that the central objective of Government is to improve the quality

of schooling by encouraging choice and local initiatives, we would suggest focusing the debate here on a number of specific issues, as follows:

i) It is the government's declared intention to make Swedish schools the best in Europe, arguing that the system as it operated so far had many deficiencies which were hidden. It would be useful to know what these deficiencies were and how they are to be remedied. More particularly, what criteria will be used to judge the eventual pre-eminence of Swedish schools as against those of other countries?

ii) This, in turn, raises questions about the evaluation and marking systems which are in the process of elaboration and more generally about the role and function of the National Agency for Education and its links to the Ministry, the government and parliament. Will goals-referenced evaluation, based on the objectives set in the national curriculum (still in the process of definition) be primarily used to sanction bad performers and reward good ones, or will it be more of a pedagogical tool to diagnose shortcomings and suggest remedial measures? If the latter, what precise measures are envisaged to support school improvement and stimulate innovation in teaching and learning which at present seems to be conspicuously absent in schools? More particularly, given the increased responsibility which devolves on school principals, by whom and how is the required training in leadership to be provided?

iii) Questions also arise from the government's emphasis on the academic versus the social role of schools: "schools shall be schools". Will not the exclusive accent on judging performance by reference to subject-matter achievement, and the diminution of non-academic options in school courses, act as a disincentive to those children who find their personal fulfilment through the pursuit of non-academic subjects? And will not a diminution of the socialising role of schools tend to reinforce the educational disadvantage of pupils from poorer socio-economic backgrounds? Finally, what is the rationale for the coexistence of two distinct teacher-training schemes, the previous one based on concurrent academic and professional training and the new one whereby professional training is super-imposed on the completion of academic training?

iv) Last, but by no means least, are questions relating to *choice*, with which we have dealt extensively in Section II of our report. Rather than imposing such a scheme *en bloc*, with all the uncertainties and problems this poses to municipalities and school districts, we have suggested the advisability of a period of trial and pilot experimentation as a first stage. It would be interesting to know how our Swedish interlocutors react to this proposal. In this connection, it would also be interesting to hear what the government's intentions are with regard to the role of *private* schools and the volume which they will be allowed or encouraged to occupy in the total school map of Sweden.

c) Adult Education

186. We can be brief on this theme. Adult education, traditionally considered as one of the "jewels" in the educational crown of Sweden, is not a priority for the new government. The need for infusing greater coherence into the manifold activities that are going on in this field is generally recognised. But we could detect no signs of a concern for setting in motion steps in this direction and it would be useful to know the reasons for this. All the more so as the need for adult training and life-long learning will be even stronger in the future and will call for closer co-ordination between the education and employment sectors. Is the ministry's policy to leave the initiative for this to its employment counterpart, the municipalities, the firms and individuals themselves? What is the Ministry's reaction to the proposal made in Section II of our report that, rather than let adult education erode continuously, an assessment should be undertaken of the present state of affairs and of future needs as a basis for redefining the directions for the future development of the entire adult education sector?

d) Higher Education

187. Section III of our report has dwelt in fair analytical detail on the issues which arise in this area. We hope, in this way, to have contributed to elucidating the knowledge-base preparatory to the proposals which Government will be submitting to parliament following the completion of the debate initiated by the Ministry's Memorandum of January 1992. Pending these proposals, most of the questions that can be posed at this stage are essentially of an informative or speculative nature. We look forward to hearing of any decisions or other developments that have occurred in the interim.

188. Within this limitation we wish to suggest the following topics for discussion, arising from decisions already taken or plans announced.

i) *Numbers and expenditures.* Whereas there is ample justification for the expansion of student numbers and that this can be achieved without detriment to quality, we raised questions about: a) the focus set on increasing enrolments in science and engineering; b) both the desirability and feasibility of the ambitious plan of doubling the number of doctorates by the year 2000. On what bases were these decisions made? In the search for additional financial resources, are any plans seriously considered for the reduction in the level of student-aid programmes?

ii) *Planning and Co-ordination.* Related to the previous question, we have suggested the need for the Ministry to increase its capacity for professionally-based analytical studies, including, in co-operation with the employment sector, indicative forecasting of broad categories of future manpower needs, to guide the development of the higher education system and corresponding allocation of resources. The abolition of UHÄ makes this all the more necessary, along with other co-ordinating functions formerly performed by that body. Has the Ministry any plans in this direction?

iii) *Admission criteria.* Setting criteria for the selection of secondary school applicants acquires new importance. Will any precise guidance be given to institutions of higher education in the setting of such criteria, particularly the relative weight to be attached to school grades and SweSAT results?

iv) *Study programmes and institutional patterns.* All indications are that no major changes are envisaged to the present unitary system of higher education, with its overlaps of various study programmes as between universities and university colleges. However, the possible extension of short courses, partly in order to meet EC requirements, will create additional pressures possibly leading to greater institutional differentiation. What is the Ministry's position on the extension of which among these programmes? Has the possibility been considered of setting up a new type of terminal, vocationally-oriented post-secondary institution which could incorporate some of the advanced vocational courses now within upper secondary schools?

v) *The quality of undergraduate education.* We have underlined the impressive and widespread efforts currently made within higher education institutions to improve the quality of undergraduate studies and raise the status of teaching. Does government envisage any precise measures to sustain these efforts, including changes in the reward structures as between the teaching and research functions? More particularly, what fate is reserved for the specific recommendations contained in the report of the Commission on Teaching within Higher Education?

vi) *Governance and evaluation.* With greater autonomy devolving to individual institutions, and growing competition among them, the role of evaluation as a steering mechanism becomes crucial. Have plans been advanced for the role and functions of the Evaluation Unit and its links to the Ministry? How will such external evaluation be related to self-evaluation within individual institutions themselves? Are predictions that student representation in institutional decision-making will be gradually eroded justified?

vii) *Privatisation.* What progress has been made with regard to the Government's initiative for a small number of universities to be converted into "foundations"? In particular, are the financial outlays required as foundation-capital the main obstacle? More generally, what are expected to be the real advantages of a "foundation" status, given the autonomy which all institutions will enjoy?

viii) *The changing role of government.* Some people anticipate that decentralisation and institutional autonomy, in the absence of a "buffer" institution of the kind UHÄ used to be, might lead to an increase in the role of government in such matters as appointment to the University Boards and the nomination of rectors. Are these fears valid?