

Socio-Educational Policies and Covid-19 – A Case Study on Finland and Sweden in the Spring 2020

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ABSTRACT

The present study compared socio-educational policies and argumentation in Sweden and Finland during Covid-19 pandemic in March-May 2020. Countries were selected, first, due to similar tuition-free basic education, which performed high in global surveys. Second, no pandemic socio-educational research existed from Nordic countries. National responses were different. Sweden kept the society open, while Finland declared emergency and partially closed the schools. Research method was hermeneutic and phenomenological. The data discussion triangulated 1) statements/information of central administration, 2) instructive releases, 3) related educational, pandemic, and other research, and 4) responses by stakeholders. The findings were surprising. The policy and argumentation strategies failed. Central administration was observed to underestimate the guardians, let alone their needs for argumentation. Swedish policy obscured mandates and restricted information, while declining trust and, finally, causing the data failure. Finnish policies faced similar challenges. However, no break in schoolwork took place, but remote learning was successful in epidemiologic and curricular senses. Moreover, Finland revealed that most school closure studies were contextually outdated. Success occurred in operational level collaboration of homes and schools. More multidisciplinary studies are needed for improved pandemic responses.

Key words: Socio-Educational Policy, School Closure, Pandemic Covid-19, Argumentation, Remote Learning, Curriculum Comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Task, Purpose and Research Question

This comparative case study focused on socio-educational policies in Finland and Sweden during Covid-19 pandemic in the spring semester 2020. The purpose of this research was to analyse trends that occurred in compulsory education central administration epidemic response, and policy. Consequently, argumentation, instructions and arrangements were followed. Furthermore, the current study investigated consequent learning environments of both Nordic countries during March-May 2020. The importance of this study arose, first, from the absence of previous Nordic comparative pandemic educational studies, as well as social and political factors listed below.

Finland and Sweden were selected for this purpose out of the 188 school closure countries in April 2020 (The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health (The Lancet), 2020; cf. UNESCO, 2020), since they both have had similar tuition-free basic and secondary education systems. Primary and lower secondary education together construct compulsory 'basic education', which last 9-10 years (Basic Education Act, 1998; Skollagen, 2010). Second, their basic

education has been regarded as a national privilege. Third, their systems have been exceptionally good in global mainstream. By and large, Nordic education has been internationally highly ranked for already two decades, belonging to Top 12 in international assessment 2018, (Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), n.d.; Lamb et al., 2017; Sahlberg, 2015; Tucker, 2019; on Swedish students, see Hellberg, 2020). Moreover, education has remained as a public sector service, while the number of private schools has been relatively small (although growing) in Sweden, as well as in Finland (Statistic Centre of Finland (STAT), 2020; Specialpedagogiska Skolmyndigheten i Sverige (SPSM), n.d.). National basic and secondary education has remained tuition-fee with an exception of private international schools (SPSM, n.d.). To underline the academic value of selected country cases in Covid-19 outbreak, their social pandemic reactions were different from mid-March 2019 onwards, regardless of administrative similarities (Finnish Government (FGovt) 2020a; 202b; Ministry of Education and Research of Sweden (MinER), 2020a; Folkhälsomyndigheten (FHM), 2020a; Finnish National Agency of Education (FNAE), 2020a; Swedish National Agency of Education (SNAE), 2020; cf. Napier et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2020). Social

restrictions notwithstanding, governments kept their internal borders open and continued traditional cross-boundary collaboration in March-May (FGovt 2020b; Finnish Border Guard, (RAJAa,n.d.; RAJAb, n.d.; cf. Napier et al., 2014; for civil rights, e.g., Scheinin, 2020).

Sweden had in official rhetoric's a more open, 'trusting', approach to Covid-19 outbreak and transmission limitations, while Finland declared the state of emergency and restricted social contacts, as well as contact teaching (Cameron & Jonsson-Cornell, 2019; MinER, 2020a; Ministry of Health and Social Services (MinHS), 2020a; SNAE, 2020; Ministry of Education (MinEdu) 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; SNAE, 2020; cf. Lipsitch et al., 2009; on political rhetoric's and Constitutional rights, see MinER, 2020a; Sveriges Radio (SV), 2020a; Lind & Namli, 2017; MinEdu, 2020a; 2020c; Emergency Powers Act (1991); Rautiainen, 2020; Hakalehto & Rautiainen, 2020). This study addressed a research question (RQ) to be answered and analyzed as a pandemic socio-educational trend indicator:

What was the main socio-educational policy and argumentation in pandemic response in Sweden and Finland?

The Data, Methodology, Limitations, Ethics, and Terminology

Regarding the data for a qualitative case study in a prompt Covid-19 socio-educational response, official information shared by responsible central (state) administration was essential. Accordingly, media releases of health, social and educational sectors were published on official websites and newspapers, let alone social media. Second, instructive responses given by other administrative organs in charge for curriculum implementation and social well-being were included into the core data. National Agencies and regional administration belonged to this group, including local education providers and healthcare. Third, overall state and social policy development information was monitored, and included. The fourth data layer were the statements and opinions given by active citizens in terms of collaborative, or other, feedback. Active citizenship meant participatory action, expertise, politics and/or expressions, in the socio-political national response. In addition to previous, active citizenship also has been a curricular goal (FNAE, 2014; SNAE, 2018). Some statistics were also needed to support the discussion, but qualitative approach mainly targeted the trends set in the RQ. Finally, international research on social development, health sector progress, and political changes were included, let alone accumulating reviews on global – and local – healthcare and education sectors.

Methodologically speaking, this was a qualitative case study. Second, it compared the data from similar countries, but with different first phase responses. Consequently, to analyse and comprehend the data of an on-going pandemic process, hermeneutic phenomenology offered the most suitable research toolbox (Heidegger, 1993; Gable & Yin, 2014; Landridge, 2007; Loima, 2020; Miller, 1996; Sloan & Bowe, 2014; Van Manen, 2006, 2011). Phenomenological, qualitative understanding has aimed for deepening comprehension,

while hermeneutic approach to the data acquisition has requested more depth than a description or statistics (Heidegger, 1993; Peim, 2018; Tucker, 2019; Van Manen, 2006). Phenomenological and qualitative comprehension may be constructed according to a research topic, covering various viewpoints and data sources (Heidegger, 1993; Landridge, 2007; Van Manen, 2006). Hermeneutic approach allowed summarizing triangulation of the recent, updating and cumulative data in a rapid change (Gayle & Lambert, 2018; Halder et al., 2010; Viner et al., 2020; also Lipsitch et al. 2009). Epidemic burst also reflected in the data availability, since English sources occurred after a 3-6 weeks delay. Sweden published most of Covid-19 releases in five domestic languages (MinEdu, 2020c; 2020d; MinHR, 2020a; MinER, 2020a; Regeringskansliet (RegK), 2020a; FHM, 2020a, 2020b). Prompt pandemic response also created unexpected and tricky sidetracks, which the data aimed to include and acknowledge. Consequently, material in Swedish and Finnish languages were included to collect wider, original perspectives. Countries were discussed according to emerging socio-political responses timings, Sweden first.

Limitations of the study may occur, first, as the restricted data of early response. Second limiting factor was the above-mentioned cumulative characteristics. Starting from a single weak central administration signal, the amount of the related data grew rapidly in just a month. The exponential growth correlated with other information of Covid-19, as well as the severe characteristics of pandemic. Furthermore, the responsible officials in both countries applied more restrictive media release strategies in April-May, thus making it harder to construct a prompt, or holistic, picture other than unspecified "national", meaning something inside the state borders (cf. Lipsitch et al., 2009; FNAE, 2020g; Yleisradio, 2020c). The restrictions of the official data were obvious from late April onwards in both countries. Even pandemic task groups set by politicians had difficulties in getting relevant information. Moreover, national resources were surprisingly heavily emphasized in official releases. The global pandemic dimensions or the supporting data opportunities from abroad weren't utilized by authorities in their national releases (cf. Lipsitch et al., 2009; THL, 2020b; FHM, 2020b; Yleisradio, 2020c; UNESCO, 2020; World Health Organization (WHO), 2020). Because of several listed limitations of the data, more interdisciplinary studies will be needed for holistic pandemic responses.

In terms of research ethics, private citizens appeared anonymously (e.g., guardians NN, private opinions), while offices and officials were named according to their public responsibilities and duties in question. Irrespective of "standard" academic ethics, individual tragedies remained not only anonymous but also absent from the text. Institutions were named, of course.

Terminologically, *policy* was understood in its wide sense, covering reactions to environmental changes and challenges. *Isolation* and *social distancing* meant here the same non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPI) as in various other studies. Social distancing grew up to a level of a *self-quarantine* (self-arranged isolation at home) for those,

who had symptoms and suspected or verified infection (cf. Cauchemez et al., 2009; MinEdu, 2020e; Wilder-Smith & Freedman, 2020). ‘Remote teaching’ has been recognized as *distant teaching and learning*, using e.g., virtual connections in instruction, work and assessment. ‘Contact teaching’ has meant traditional, close learning and teaching occasions, noting curricular varieties (FNAE, 2014; SNAE, 2018; FNAE, 2020a). A terminological nuance was *technology-assisted contact teaching* in Finland. Education providers may use suitable technology from any school facility to offer lessons and learning environments for pupils, who can possibly be located elsewhere. Legislative interpretation had included it into a contact-teaching context in Finland (FNAE, 2014; Hakalehto & Rautiainen, 2020; FNAE, n.d.). Tellingly, *basic education* meant compulsory primary and lower secondary grades. Closely related to this was an early childhood education, as well as preschool classes, in kindergartens.

Background, Pandemic Situation and Related Literature

“Today, with influenza vaccinations available and established health-care systems, we might feel that the events and stories of the 1918 pandemic are distant from our everyday lives” (Gritti, 2020, p. 36).

None of the European or other, let alone Nordic countries, hadn’t faced such a strong epidemic spread as Covid-19 since Spanish influenza 1918–20 (Gritti, 2020; Taubenberger, 2006; Wu & McGoogan, 2020). Accordingly, national health officials’ estimations were careful in February 2020 in both countries. The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) leading epidemiologist, Mr. Salminen, told first in February 2020 that Finland would likely stay intact,

but “individual cases may occur” among returning travelers from epidemic areas (Wuhan, Northern Italy). Epidemic authorities soon corrected statements in early March to an estimation about “not knowing”, whether Covid-19 had entered Finland. A week later a state of emergency was declared due to pandemic (THL 2020a, 2020b; Aivelo, 2020; Gråsten, 2020; see also FGovt, 2020a; Ferguson et al., 2020; STAT, 2020; cf. Figure 1.; cf. Lipsitch et al., 2009). Restrictions started and were lifted gradually, as the monitored daily infection cases started to get lower 14th May – 1st June. Finland moved officially to a hybrid strategy (‘test-trace-isolate’). Consequently, the daily infection numbers rose again in late May - early June (FGovt, 2020b; MinEdu, 2020b; THL, 2020g; cf. John Hopkins University (JHU), 2020).

In Sweden, the early administrative response came by stealth, accompanied by a smooth public estimation from state epidemiologist, Mr. Tegnell. He said in late January that virus didn’t pose a “threat” to Sweden (RegK, 2020a 2020b; FHM, 2020b; Sveriges Radio [SR], 2020; cf. Ferguson et al., 2020; Lipsitch et al., 2009). However, in a timeline of nine weeks from the outbreak, if counted from the first emerging cases early March 2020, the official number of infected people was higher in Sweden than in neighboring countries. In altogether 11 weeks, the relative mortality rate of Sweden was globally the highest per population, and stayed high (RegK, 2020; THL 2020e; FHM, 2020b; STV, 2020; Andersson, 2020, 2020b; Orange, 2020; Vogel, 2020). Meanwhile, state epidemiologist Tegnell corrected his “underestimation” of the mortality. Sweden’s high death rate rose increasingly to media spotlights in late May-early June 2020. Irrespective of that, the state epidemiologist maintained a separate opinion from other experts (SR, 2020b; Andersson, 2020; Orange, 2020; Cohen, 2020;

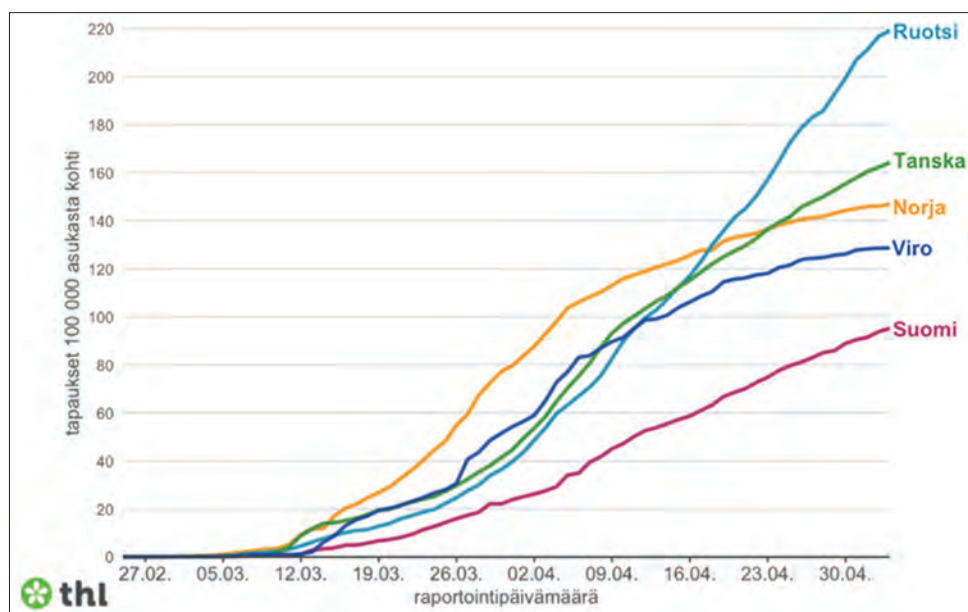


Figure 1. Confirmed tested Corona infections per 100,000 people, 6th of May 2020, in Nordic Countries. Testing numbers and strategies have been different. Consequently, figure didn’t reveal the whole process but showed a subsequent trend. Sweden was marked with light blue and Finland purple, while Denmark had green, Norway yellow, and Estonia dark blue. Vertical numbers: cases per 100,000 population. Horizontal line: the day of laboratory test confirmation.

Source: THL, 2020e; cf. THL, 2020g; cf. UNESCO, 2020; JHU, 2020; WHO, 2020.

Lindeberg, 2020). Finally, in on 26th of May, Swedish health authorities officially denied herd immunity policy (FHM, 2020c; Schulman, 2020c; SR, 2020b). A few days later, state epidemiologist also confirmed the change of Swedish strategy (Mossige-Norheim, 2020; cf. JHU, 2020).

Related literature has been interestingly multidisciplinary. The international medical research focused on virus contamination, sickness and symptoms, as well as the treatment (Anderson, Heesterbeek, Klinkenberg, & Hollingsworth, 2020; Cheng et al., (in press); Cohen & Corney, 2020; Treibel et al., 2020; Wu & McCoogan, 2020; cf. Lo et al., 2005). On the other hand, studies on socio-cultural and educational effects have been emerging, referring also to previous pandemic years and research on those years (Bruns, Kraguljac & Bruns, 2020; Burgess & Horii, 2012; Colao et al., (in press); Cauchemez et al., 2009; Ferguson et al., 2020; Lipsitch et al., 2009; Lo et al., 2005). Moreover, previous school closures during pandemics – like 1918, 1950s-1960s, 2009, 2013 – have been studied from their impacts, NPIs, and from epidemic, social, and economic viewpoints (Cauchemez et al., 2009; Lo et al., 2005; Viner et al., 2020; The Lancet, 2020; cf. Burgess & Horii, 2012; Zhang et al., 2011; Khoon Lee et al., 2011; Halder et al., 2010; cf. UNESCO, 2020; WHO, 2020). In addition, national healthcare officials have suggested strategies, like mitigation or suppression, both including temporary school closure estimations. While school closures have reduced modeled influenza outbreak peak transmissions even 29,6%, postponing the median peak up to 11 days, Imperial College London models run by Ferguson et al. (2020) suggested 2-4% decrease of pandemic mortality due to school closures in UK (Ferguson et al., 2020; cf. Cheng et al., (in press); Zhang et al., 2011; Nasifah et al., 2018; Khoon Lee et al., 2011). From the socio-educational focus of this contribution, the timing – so-called “trigger threshold” – of school closures has been more interesting than population mortality rate, however (Zhang et al., 2011; cf. Nafisah et al., 2018; Khoon Lee et al., 2011; Halder et al., 2010; Ferguson et al.,

2020; The Lancet, 2020). Attached Figure 2 clarified why school closures have been used in pandemic influenza years in the 20th century (Cauchemez et al., 2009). The virus was other than the one in 2020, but children have repeatedly been attacked.

Previous pandemic school closures have been understood as breaks or discontinued learning. This seemed to be a common pandemic comprehension also in 2020 (Cauchemez et al., 2009; Colao et al., (in press); Ferguson et al., 2020; Colao et al., (in press); The Lancet, 2020; Viner et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2011; Nafisah et al., 2018; Halder et al., 2010; UNESCO, 2020). Closing types have been *total closure* (aborting all the students and staff), *class/school dismissal* (staff remained present but students not, or only a few), *reactive closure* (after infections found in facility) and *proactive closure*. Presented Covid-19 closure types notwithstanding, “the closure of schools” meant in Finland – in this study – partial school facilities closure for upper basic education grades (4th onwards) as a proactive NPI to “flatten the curve” (JHU, 2020; Cauchemez et al., 2009; Ferguson et al., 2020; Lipsitch et al., 2009; Halder et al., 2010; Viner et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2012; FNAE, 2020a; FNAE, 2020b; MinEdu, 2020b; MinER, 2020a; UNESCO, 2020).

Regarding socio-educational research, an entire learning, motivation and psychological human growth research tradition has been born from a *self-determination macro theory* (SDT), presented initially by Deci and Ryan (1985) (cf. Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy, competence and relatedness have been confirmed to be crucial elements for mental and physical wellbeing in all age groups. Encouraging environment, and atmosphere have repeatedly been revealed to enhance intrinsic motivation, which has enabled meaningful learning and optimal human functioning in global context of life-long learners. Accordingly, the development of physical - and other – learning environments, teachers and families’ support processes, as well as feedback, assessment, and curriculum development together with the 21st century skills have been

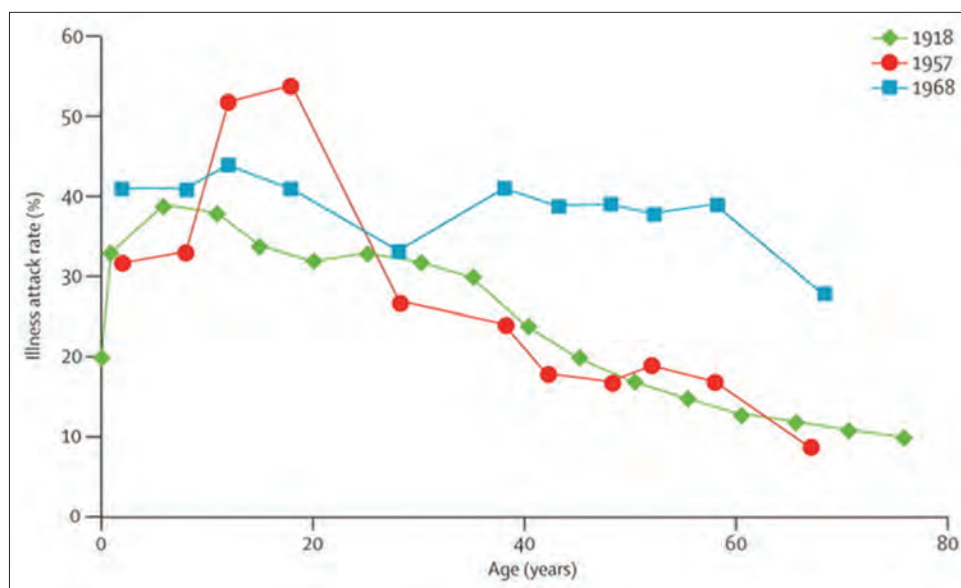


Figure 2. Pandemic attacks 1918, 1957 and 1968 by age cohort percentages (Source: Cauchemez et al., 2009; cf. The Lancet, 2020; UNESCO, 2020)

widely studied (Albrecht & Kavabenick, 2019; Atjonen et al., 2019; Borman et al., 2016; Burton et al., 2006; Butler, 2019; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dede, 2010; Gardner, 1999; Gordon, 2006; Grolnick, 1999; Hecht et al., 2019; Kaplan et al., 2019; Lamb et al., 2017; Lim, 2006; Loima, 2019, 2020; Miller, 1996; Niemi et al., 2018; Pearlman, 2010; Pyhältö et al., 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sahlberg, 2015; Sormunen et al., 2019; Tucker, 2019; Vansteenkiste et al., 2010; Lee & Tan, 2018; cf. UNESCO, 2016, 2020).

NATIONAL POLICIES, ARGUMENTATION AND SUPPORT IN SWEDEN AND FINLAND

National Agencies in Education Policy Implementation

The Nordic countries have democratic representatives, and decentralized governance. Voted politicians run as Government (State Council), Parliament, and decide national policies on the grounds of officials' preparations in society sectors (EURYDICE, 2018a, 2018b). Ministries seldom have implementation mandates on themselves, however. Apart from coordinative organs, regional and local officials have implementation, adjustment, maintenance and surveillance mandates. To comprehend national policies, argumentation, and instruction analysis, a simple model of administrative National Agencies clarified the structures (Table 1).

Swedish Socio-Educational Policy - An Early Response, Crisscrossing Information and Collaboration in Terms of Past

In Sweden, the National Agency of Education collaborated from March 2020 onwards closely, sharing mutual

information for public purposes with national health officials, Civil Contingency Agency (MSB) and Crisis Information websites of state officials (FHM, 2020a; SNAE, 2020; MSB, 2020; krisinformation.se, n.d.; cf. Figure 3). In addition, public opinion was monitored frequently by officials, and observed 'trust' was informed every other week (MSB, 2020).

Tellingly, Sweden selected – for constitutional reasons and lack of time – an open social approach with some recommendations (MinER2020a; MinHS2020a; cf. MinEdu2020a, 2020b, 2020c; Lipsitch et al., 2009; cf. Ferguson et al., 2020). Sweden had strategically prepared from early February to close e.g., public institutions, if needed, by moderating temporary legislation. However, it took almost two months to gain such readiness (RegK, 2020a; MinER, 2020a; MinHS, 2020a, 2020b; Cameron & Jonsson-Cornell, 2019; cf. Lipsitch et al., 2009). Moreover, the government had limited public meetings to 50 people, urged senior citizens to stay home, set some restaurant restrictions and given other social recommendations. Official crisis and policy information given by central administration was easily available by April, since Swedish emergency authorities had spread the information in 20 domestic and foreign languages from late March onwards (krisinformation.se, n.d.; MSB, n.d.; MinER, 2020a; Lipsitch et al., 2009).

Followingly, Sweden kept basic education school facilities open, and contact teaching went on. Main official socio-educational argumentation started by telling that going to school was compulsory, while the risk of Coronavirus was low (FHM, 2020a; Lipsitch et al., 2009; Cauchemez et al., 2009; Ferguson et al., 2020; cf. Albrecht & Kavabenick, 2019; Borman et al., 2016; cf. Skollagen, 2010; SNAE, 2018). From 29th April onwards, the national officials instructed more about partial, but also total, school closures (MSB, 2020; SNAE, 2020; Lipsitch et al., 2009; Viner et al., 2020). SNAE held itself a right to close on institution, if needed. Previously, the implementation mandate had been in the hands of local administration as educational providers. To control the pandemic uncertainty, central administration activated its role (Lipsitch et al., 2009; Cauchemez et al., 2009). From the end of April, the principal of an institution, municipality, or National Agency of Education had authorization to close a whole basic education school or a part of it. Accordingly, they all could arrange remote teaching, use Saturdays and Sundays, or order other compensative arrangements for facility closures. The number of schoolwork could be revised upwards, but also reduced, according to local circumstances. Furthermore, the National Agency gave assessment instructions. In the 21st century educational terms, the external "format" and control was a more important argument for open basic education than learning and competencies mentioned in curriculum (MSB, 2020; SNAE, 2020; Skollagen, 2010; Lipsitch et al., 2009; Cauchemez et al., 2009; Colao et al., (in press)Viner et al., 2020; cf. SNAE, 2018; Albrecht & Kavabenick, 2019; Burton et al., 2016; Hecht et al., 2019; Kaplan et al., 2019; Lim, 2006; Pearlman, 2010; also Lee & Tan, 2018). As a mid-conclusion, the socio-educational policy steps were taken to withdraw implementation mandates from the field and

Table 1. The tasks and roles of National Agencies of Education in Finland and Sweden [Source: Official websites of FNAE, SNAE, (March-May 2020), (Volmari, 2019)]

Finnish National Agency of Education, FNAE	Swedish National Agency of Education, SNAE
National core curricula, learning assessment outcomes with Finnish Education Evaluation Center (FINEEC), quality assurance (with local education providers)	National core curricula, support of schools, evaluation of schools
Statistics, analyses, reports and reviews, national assisting learning materials, in-service training, private school licenses, teachers' qualification certificates for foreign teachers,	Statistics, analyses, the Board of Appeal of Education complaints and students' rights, Swedish School Inspectorate, licenses for private schools, Special needs Agency (SPSM) Financial support for schools, in-service training, national learning materials, support, research on education
Instructive and directive role growing (March-May) 2020-	Directive and supervisory role growing strongly (March-May) 2020-

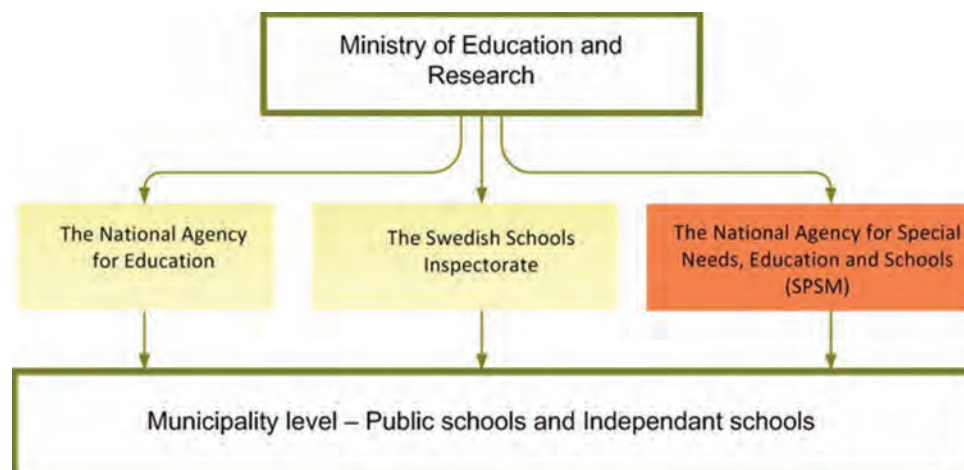


Figure 3. Swedish educational system, which has three separate mid-level agencies. In Finland, there is only one agency (EURYDICE, 2018a, 2018b; FNAE, 2020).

Source: Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten, (SPSM, n.d.)

take a firmer central administration grip to gain pandemic governance control. Exceptional, gossip-sensitive learning circumstances and amotivating “compulsory” schooling notwithstanding, the policy was to keep systemic functions as normal as possible, and gradually achieve a pandemic herd immunity (cf. SNAE, 2018; Skollagen, 2010; UNESCO, 2016; Kassnert, 2020; SR, 2020b; Lipsitch et al., 2009; about motivation *ad hoc*, see Schulman, 2020; cf. Albrecht & Kavabenick, 2019; Borman et al., 2016; Hecht et al., 2019; Kaplan et al., 2019; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste et al., 2010).

Why did such a counteraction appear? Contaminated school staff, occurring deaths, infected pupils and confusing information policies had taken place, as well as total school closures up to two weeks. Those were probably the main reasons for national reinstructions on 29th of April. Crisscrossing local acts were noticed by social or other media. Moreover, the capital area students’ infection cases in early April had created social unrest, since the guardians of children, or anyone else, were not informed at all. This was alarmingly amotivating, as well (Sjögren 2020; Schulman, 2020; Jällhage, 2020; Vogel, 2020; cf. Borman et al., 2016; Grolnick et al., 1999; Gardner, 1999; Zins, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste et al., 2010). The same non-informative strategy was used in Uppsala, once a teacher got infected. Goteborg city told on websites that it will not inform guardians about suspected, neither confirmed, infections at schools. Individual privacy came first in pandemic circumstances, regardless of repeated curricular “sense of security” and family support – not to mention various studies on performance enhancement with competence, relatedness and autonomy (SVT, 2020; SNAE, 2018; Goteborg Stad, 2020; UNESCO, 2016; Albrecht & Kavabenick, 2019; Borman et al., 2016; Burton et al., 2006; Butler, 2019; Hecht et al., 2019; Lamb et al., 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste et al., 2010; also Loima, 2019). Children’s intrinsic motivation factors, holistic and socio-emotional learning (SEL) played a minor role in contradicting official, but also non-official, information and administration puzzle (The Lancet,

2020; Viner et al., 2020; cf. Albrecht & Kavabenick, 2019; Burton et al., 2006; Kaplan et al., 2019; Pearlman, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Zins et al., 2007). Gradually, some institutions, guardians and media started to wonder, why the herd immunity wouldn’t work – even if 25% of the school staff had been infected (Andersson, 2020; Schulman 2020; Fall, 2020; Jällhage, 2020; Olsson, 2020; Magnusson, 2020; Neuding, 2020; Vogel, 2020; cf. Kassnert, 2020; Lindeberg, 2020; Cauchemez et al., 2009; Ferguson et al., 2020).

In early March, when eight schools in Stockholm capital area were closed for Coronavirus risk for a single Friday, the state epidemiologist Tegnell criticized them heavily and had a meeting with capital authorities. A *reactive*, regional *school closure* had taken place against the strategy (Cauchemez et al., 2009). Tegnell had coauthored a pandemic school closure study in 2009 and seemed to be thinking that schools – and pandemic (measurements) – had remained the same as shown in Figure 2 (see also Cauchemez et al., 2009; cf. Sahlberg, 2015; Tucker, 2019; Lee & Tan, 2018). He referred to “important work” the parents were prevented from doing, if children didn’t go to school, thus regarding basic education schools as daycare premises. No students’ enhancing motivation and, thus, modern well-being factors were discussed in public (SNAE, 2018; Jällhage & Svahn, 2020; Läraren, 2020; Jällhage, 2020; Olsson 2020; Kassnert, 2020; also, Viner et al., 2020; Cauchemez et al., 2009; cf. Albrecht & Kavabenick, 2019; Dede, 2010; Lamb et al., 2017; Grolnick, 1999). According to the main epidemiologist, only symptomatic children were to stay at home, but suspected infections were not to be tested (Kassnert, 2020; cf. UNESCO, 2016; Vogel, 2020). Furthermore, the Swedish epidemiologist seemed to have regarded compulsory contact schooling as the only valid teaching in his socio-political “hidden curriculum” (Cauchemez et al. 2009; Colao et al., (in press); Kassnert, 2020; The Lancet, 2020; Viner et al., 2020; cf. Atjonen et al., 2019; Gordon, 2006; Gardner, 1999; UNESCO, 2020; also Borman et al., 2016; Dede, 2010; Kaplan et al., 2019; Miller, 1996). Subsequently, national health officials had a traditional 20th century understanding

of national curricula, teaching and facilities' importance as daycare and structural well-being premises for 7-16-years old (cf. Albrecht & Kavabenick, 2019; Burton et al., 2006; Lamb et al., 2017; Lim, 2006; Miller, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Lee & Tan, 2018). Apart from this throwback to the 20th century, healthcare surely had updating epidemic comprehension, but seemingly relied on the previous century epidemic school closure studies confirmed by Viner et al. (2020), leaving also students untested (FHM, 2020a; Nafisah et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2011; The Lancet, 2020; Viner et al., 2020; cf. Goteburg stad, 2020; Gordon, 2006; SNAE, 2018; UNESCO, 2016; Vogel, 2020). Meanwhile, no studies on learning were published in the websites of SNAE. National tests at schools were cancelled, but a study on pupils' comprehension on those was published in April (SNAE, 2020a, 2020b; cf. Lim, 2006; Tucker, 2019). The Swedish educational policy in March-May relied more on contemporary non-pharmacological comprehension – of the past school closures – than innovative learning arrangements and children's tested security. Consequently, it lacked multi-professionally supported self-affirmation and ensured well-being of learners or their families (SNAE, 2018; Lipsitch et al., 2009; The Lancet, 2020; Viner et al., 2020; cf. Grolnick, 1999; Dede, 2010; Albrecht & Kavabenick, 2019; Pearlman, 2010; Sahlberg, 2015).

Conclusively, the "hidden curriculum" of crucial health administration persons and their official information affected more than the updated 21st century learning comprehension and curricular key competencies (Skolverket, 2020; FHM, 2020a; SNAE, 2018; UNESCO, 2020; Kassnert, 2020; Jällhage, 2020; Cauchemez et al., 2009; Ferguson et al., 2020; cf. Nafisah et al. 2018; The Lancet, 2020; Viner et al., 2020; Gordon, 2006; Grolnick et al., 1999; Colao et al., (in press); Dede, 2010; Borman et al. 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Atjonen et al., 2020; Smith, 1991). In late May, the socio-political situation was already different due to internal and external pressures, added with growing foreign attention and media inquiries (JHU, 2020; Andersson, 2020; Mossige-Norheim, 2020; Fall, 2020; Lindeberg, 2020; Vogel, 2020; Reuters, 2020). Interesting enough – coincidentally – was that a university professor named "availability of teachers" to be the biggest problem in further educational development in Sweden. He told that exploring, or innovative learning environment development had been relatively modest (FHM, 2020a; MSB, 2020; Colao et al., (in press); Sjögren, 2020; Sandberg & Aschberg, 2020; Sandeberg, 2020; Colao et al., (in press); Neuding, 2020; UNESCO, 2016; cf. Dede, 2010; Albrecht & Kavabenick, 2019; Burton et al., 2006; Lamb et al., 2017; Loima, 2019; Lee & Tan, 2018).

... "culture can be understood as not only habits and beliefs about perceived wellbeing, but also political, economic, legal, ethical, and moral practices and values" (Napier et al., 2014, 1607).

How was the educational policy argumentation trusted in Sweden? According to repeated corona barometers (of more than 6,000 citizens), Swedish national healthcare had more than 80% trust, National Health Officials 77% of trust, and Government 69% of trust during April - mid-May

(6,169 participants). The Civil Contingencies Agency itself had 59% of trust, as the schools enjoyed 53% of support. Overall, Swedish emergency policy operations had 70% support, which also reflected to entire official Covid-19 response (MSB, 2020). Irrespective of this, or any other publicly 'trusted' society openness, Swedish Government had instructed upper secondary schools, vocational institutes and higher education to remote teaching^{18th} of March. Albeit the trust, selected school policy – and lack of tests on pupils and staff – gradually had increasing opposing voices towards the end of May. Then, the trust started to diminish rapidly (Sjögren, 2020; Landeberg, 2020; Andersson, 2020; Mossige-Norheim, 2020; Schulman, 2020; Fall, 2020; Skaraborgs Allehända, 2020; Jällhage & Svahn, 2020; Läraren, 2020; Jällhage, 2020; Olsson, 2020; Neuding, 2020; Reuters, 2020; guardians NN, private opinions, [Tweets], May 22-30; cf. Smith, 1991). Apart from public opinion, teachers trade unionists were not satisfied to restricted corona testing services (Jällhage & Svahn, 2020). Especially this was emphasized, when teachers didn't belong to "key professions" category in society. In late May, the "risky" professions in Sweden were reviewed, and the Ministry of Social Services reconsidered teachers' risks after deaths at schools (Läraren 2020b; cf. Lipsitch et al., 2009; Cauchemez et al., 2009; cf. Lee & Tan, 2018; about testing, see JHU, 2020, WHO, 2020).

In Swedish socio-educational policy, some single over-reactions in central pandemic administration comprehension against local practices and *reactive school closures*, started the social mistrust and citizens' rejective response. Policies and educational comprehension seemed to be most conflicting, when it came to safe and innovative learning environments vs. daycare maintenance in facilities (cf. Ferguson et al., 2020; The Lancet, 2020; Viner et al., 2020). Central administration sought solutions from the past, thus spreading an outdated comprehension of educational field and teachers' profession (krisinformation.se, n.d.; MSB, 2020; SNAE, 2018, 2020a; Cauchemez et al., 2009; Colao et al., (in press); Halder et al. 2010; cf. Dede, 2010; Kaplan et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Pyhältö et al., 2014; Lee & Tan, 2018). Finally, previous socio-educational decisions done already in February were not officially changeable even though the pandemic research had taken big leaps (Andersson, 2020; Mossige-Norheim, 2020; Schulman, 2020; Reuters, 2020; JHU, 2020; RegK, 2020b; SNAE, 2020b; Ferguson et al., 2020). Selected "trigger thresholds" for upper school closures appeared to be too late, when compared with infection and mortality rates with neighboring countries in late May (FHM, 2020a, 2020b; THL, 2020f; JHU, 2020; Andersson, 2020; Schulman 2020; Fall, 2020; Reuters, 2020; Cauchemez et al., 2009; Ferguson et al., 2020; The Lancet, 2020; Viner et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2011). During the socio-educational policy implementations in March-May, Swedish education and epidemiologist authorities seemed to miss a unique opportunity for the pandemic – and special education needs – data collection, as well (Vogel, 2020; cf. Burgoyne, 2020). It told a lot about internal confusion and mixed viewpoints in the central administration.

Finnish Policy: Emergency Response, Obscure Information – and Remote Learning Success

“The COVID-19 crisis highlights that school fulfils not only an educational mission of knowledge acquisition, but it also satisfies the socialisation needs of young people.” (Colao et al., (in press), 3124)

Irrespective of Swedish schedule, Finland had closed the schools, first as a recommendation, from 16th March onwards. On the very same day, the Government declared the state of national emergency. Regional state agencies confirmed the school closures with no delay starting from 17th March (MinEdu, 2020a, 2020b; AVI, 2020). Apart from closing activities, early childhood education and lower primary grades (1-3) remained open for families, whose parents worked on critical sectors (MinER, 2020a; MinEdu, 2020b; MinEdu, 2020g; AVI, 2020; FNAE, 2020a). This kind of social comprehension of necessary, vital working sectors was mutual for Sweden and Finland. The official argumentation for proactive school *facility closure* was to restrict transmission of Covid-19 and, second, to protect the risk groups in national emergency (MinEdu, 2020a, 2020b; Hakalehto & Rautiainen, 2020; cf. Cauchemez et al., 2009; The Lancet, 2020; Viner et al., 2020; also Zhang et al., 2011; Khoon Lee et al., 2011).

Tellingly, school closure instructions recommended distant teaching for everyone but allowed crucial workers to have their children in contact teaching and daycare. Minister of Education, Ms. Andersson, asked symptomatic children to stay home, as well as their parents (AVI, 2020; Andersson, n.d.). Regarding “trigger threshold” timings, the digital leap to remote teaching took place early enough to limit the virus spread, since countrywide infection rate was less than 20 confirmed cases on 17th March (cf. Figure 1). Altogether, eight (8) percent of basic education pupils attended to contact teaching during the partial closure, while 32-35 % of daycare children went to kindergartens (MinEdu, 2020b, 2020g; Viner et al, 2020; Zhang et al., 2011). Curriculum and existing teaching practices already recognized virtual learning environments, as well as transversal core competencies to exist, be used and assessed (FNAE, 2014, 2020a).

No break in teaching or learning took place in Finland (FNAE, 2014, 2020a; cf. Cauchemez et al. 2009; Nafisah et al., 2018; Ferguson et al., 2020; Viner et al., 2020). In terms of contemporary international epidemiologic comprehension (Colao et al., (in press); Ferguson et al., 2020; Viner et al., 2020), Finnish basic education made an outstanding performance difference from other countries. Irrespective of that, the leading Finnish epidemiologist followed and accompanied Ferguson et al. (2020) and Viner et al. (2020) in his recommendations and estimations, criticising media comments and his loud opposition. He had also resisted school closures in late February – early March (FNAE, 2014; Salminen, n.d.; Viner et al., 2020; cf. Yleisradio, 2020c). In line with his Swedish colleague, the Finnish epidemiologist seemed to have an outdated comprehension about the 21st century curriculum and learning activities.

FNAE, or local education providers, didn't have much time to instruct the schools and/or teachers, but distant

teaching and learning started well. Local schools were prompt enough in their digital leap. University of Turku coordinated in late April a 10-day web survey, in which remote teaching and learning experiences, as well as welfare issues, were asked from. More than 50,000 pupils replied, pointing out positive learning experiences, like flexibility in timings, in addition to total absence of bullying in the remote period. In conclusion, positive experiences reflected firm intrinsic motivation for schooling during the remote learning time (Burton et al., 2006; Borman et al. 2016; Kaplan et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Loima, 2019; Liiten, 2020; University of Turku, 2020; cf. Colao et al., (in press); Viner et al., 2020).

On the other hand, pupils revealed in survey that they were worried about their guardians' well-being. Furthermore, they missed classmates. About 60 % of pupils had accomplished all the work during the remote learning period, while additional 35% told they completed “almost everything”. Learning difficulties seemed to occur to same pupils that already had decisions or enhanced or special support in close contact teaching and learning (Basic Education Act, Sections 16-18, 1998; Liiten, 2020). On the other hand, they were justified to close contact teaching during the closure (AVI, 2020). Apart from the sound self-assessment mainstream, upper graders seemed to feel uncertain, whether they had learned “enough”, likely referring to subject matter (cf. Atjonen et al., 2019; Loima, 2019). A detailed report and analysis about this survey will be delivered to education providers in October-November 2020 (Liiten, 2020; University of Turku, 2020; cf. Atjonen et al., 2019; Niemi et al., 2014; Pyhältö et al., 2014; Sormunen et al., 2019; also Miller, 1996). An overview on learning and self-assessment already revealed that upper graders had the shortest experience (1-3 years) in continuous assessment and self-assessment. Lower graders (4th-8th) had been performing it since 2016 (FNAE, 2014; Atjonen et al. 2019; Loima, 2019). According to a recent survey by FNAE, 75 % of basic education and upper secondary teachers had in late 2019 virtual learning environment tools arranged by educational providers. Almost all teachers had also used them, while project-based learning was familiar for pupils. Moreover, every teacher was familiar with continuous assessment, including self-assessment. Initiative results confirmed that already three years of curriculum assessment reform were enough to assess remote learning outcomes (FNAE, 2020d; FNAE, 2014; Atjonen et al., 2019; Loima, 2019; Niemi et al., 2018; Sormunen et al., 2019).

Local differences – regarding remote teaching and studying tools – existed, which was in line with core curriculum, and local curricula (FNAE, 2020d, 2020e; Atjonen et al., 2019; Loima, 2020; Niemi et al., 2018; Pyhältö et al., 2014; Sahlberg, 2015; Lee & Tan, 2018). National Agency's learning materials and instructions appeared to websites in early April, but some over-instructing details were soon withdrawn (cf. Basic Education Act, Chapter 2, 1998). As was the case in March, when Government hastily drafted “trigger threshold” schedules for closure, also early opening measurements included misleading interpretations about the decentralized administration. Consequently, unnecessary instructions and/or restrictions

on local teaching arrangements took place in reopening phase (Basic Education Act, 1998; FGov, 2020c; FNAE, 2020h; cf. Burgoune, 2020; Cauchemez et al., 2009; Hakalehto & Rautiainen, 2020; Viner et al., 2020; also, Hakalehto & Rautiainen, 2020; Smith, 1991). These misleading or irrelevant instructions were rapidly aborted from websites.

Repeated short episodes – that happened twice – gave evidence that governmental instructions, given by the Ministry and FNAE, tried to regulate more rules than their mandates allowed in an unexperienced situation of pandemic emergency (FGovt, 2020b, 2020c; MinEdu, 2020b; FNAE, 2020g, 2020h; Basic Education Act, 1998; Burgoyne, 2020; Colao et al., (in press); Cauchemez et al., 2009; Hakalehto & Rautiainen, 2020; Viner et al., 2020; Luukkainen, n.d.). For example, the Ministry initially “ordered” a closure, which had to be a “recommendation” in terms of Constitutional rights. Later, the Ministry and FNAE tried to force all the students to attend the reopened schools in May, irrespective of potential risk group members in families (cf. Viner et al., 2020). Only after the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman’s (NDO, 2020) statement, the right for distant teaching as a part of regular schooling for risk group families was also evident in May. Third, overruling of children’s rights and safety were the Ministry’s first reopening instructions (4.5.2020) for education providers without proper safety updates but mostly “normal” arrangements. Mentioned mistakes were corrected, but guardians and teachers, as well as Teachers’ Trade Union, got worried (cf. FGovt, 2020b, 2020c; FNAE 2020f, 2020g; Teachers’ Trade Union (OAJ), 2020; Colao et al., (in press); Luukkainen, n.d.). At the same time, the Minister of Education, Ms. Andersson, told that central administration already had started to prepare legislation for possible remote teaching in the autumn 2020, if the pandemic situation were to worsen. This message didn’t calm the worried guardians, either (Vesala, 2020; OAJ, 2020).

The distant learning period lasted until 13th May in Finland (MinEdu, 2020c; AVI, 2020). Given the updated pandemic situation estimation by Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare (THL 2020c), the Government decided to change its pandemic policy in early May to a ‘hybrid’ strategy, starting with libraries and basic education contact teaching (MinEdu, 2020d). Argumentation was epidemic, but also Constitutional (Vesala, 2020; THL, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020e; Helsingin Sanomat, 2020b). According to Ministry, altogether, 88% of basic education pupils/students returned to schools, while 56% of early childhood children started on 14th May. The percentages of returned pupils were enough to indicate the main trend, since 75 % of educational providers had participated in this survey (MinEdu, 2020f; Burgoyne, 2020; Zhang et al., 2011; Viner et al., 2020). Children and families seemed to have waited for the contact teaching. Moreover, the Ministry, as well as local education providers, had expressed their worriedness about those (estimated 4,000) children, who needed social support and special care (MinEdu, 2020g; FNAE, 2020g; Andersson, n.d.). According to official reports, estimations and the Data, no children were “lost” during the remote teaching and learning period, however.

In the light of timings, “trigger threshold” for reopening was quite successful, since no more than 250-290 pupils got quarantined in Southern Finland, being exposed to 12 confirmed infection cases (Yleisradio, 2020b; cf. Cauchemez et al., 2009; Viner et al., 2020). Previous school closure study recommendations had considered 6-8 weeks to be an ideal time to “flatten the curve”, but left it depending on the desired outcome (Nafisah et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2012; Viner et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2020). Interestingly, Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare did not keep public records, or the specific Data, from infections at schools or exposed children. Instead of that, they summarized children into daily age cohorts. By the early June, there were 600 infected children altogether. Irrespective of the missing Data, individual teachers and National Broadcasting Company kept updated statistics from schools (THL, 2020e, 2020f, 2020g; Teacher NN, private opinion, [Tweets], May 29). In terms of official hybrid strategy guidelines (‘test-trace-isolate’), it was not logical to leave exposed pupils untested, however (THL, 2020f, 2020g; Teachers NN, private opinions, [Tweets], May 14-29; cf. FNAE, 2020f). While the Ministry was publicly worried about the equal treatment of children, it didn’t promote active testing for students (MinEdu, 2020g; Andersson, n.d.; THL, 2020e; FNAE, 2020f). However, a single teacher had kept precise learning diary and told that 40% of daily time in school was used for handwashing (Teacher NN2, private opinion, [Tweets], May 29). Operational level took the hygienic instructions seriously.

Regardless of different approaches, socio-educational policy in Finland faced similar challenges as Sweden. Official information was contradictory, hesitating – and in the case of Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare – also late and restricted, as well as misleading. Once the school closure took place, a “safety or risky” debate started in social media, requesting – but not really receiving – more argumentised information from the authorities. Moreover, official statements hadn’t been fully convincing due to previous and repeated loopholes in information (Vesanto, 2020; THL, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020e; Helsingin Sanomat, 2020b). First, there was a respirator scandal in Emergency Supply Center, which violated the credibility of responsible authorities in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Second, there were visible and audible disagreements in central crisis administration. The CEO of Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare suggested suppression, and community masks, which were immediately rejected by the same Ministry (Yleisradio, 2020a; Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2020). In sum, administrative reliability and transparency launched questions and investigation requests (Parliamentary Ombudsman, 2020; Helsingin Sanomat, 2020). When foreign scientific media and experts told about unknown transmission roles of children, in addition to related emerging sicknesses, Finnish Health authorities told it to be safe to go to school. In the middle of contradictory information, FNAE and the Ministry mostly tried to have more instructive roles than their mandates allowed (FGovt, 2020c; Huoltovarmuuskeskus, 2020; Turunen, 2020; Vogel & Cousins-Frankel, 2020; THL, 2020a, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g;

Helsingin Sanomat, 2020). A numerous group of worried guardians revealed another trend, by collecting a public appeal against the school reopening policy in early May. It was delivered to the Minister of Education. The published appeal had updated, international pandemic research references with more than 11,100 signatures in eight days but no effect on decisions (Guardians NN (11,169 people), and private opinions, [Tweets], May 13). National single-mindedness had got fragile with information loopholes. Apart from those, the operational education level maintained collaboration with all guardians.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Socio-educational Covid-19 policies in Sweden and Finland had mutual trends. In terms of failures, the citizens' need for updated and argumentised information was underestimated. Another underestimation was the educational level of the 21st century guardians. The hermeneutic Data review revealed multidimensional abilities to combine the international Data beyond national releases and instructions. Worried guardians and citizens were able to act faster than responsible officials, who then blamed them. Consequently, third failure in both countries was to comprehend pandemic 'nationally' with national resources and solutions. By following an outdated comprehension of educational dynamics, Swedish authorities started to lose social trust, in addition to accountable management of epidemic situation. No reliable Data from infected/exposed pupils or citizens were available by 6th of June. Finnish administration had Constitutional approach, prompt emergency response and effective local administration, which together maintained accountability as a main trend. Administration notwithstanding, educators, guardians and pupils did much better than officials expected.

Regarding success, Sweden kept society and compulsory schools open. However, social development arose uncertainty along with teachers' professional attraction, which went downhill. For Finns, the biggest success was curricular, social and operational. Regardless of confusions, the nuclear schoolwork – meaningful learning - wasn't interrupted. Basic education pupils and teachers had a sound intrinsic motivation. The University of Turku accomplished a vital survey on remote learning and well-being. Guardians supported schools, irrespective of critics on information loopholes. Finnish education broke the pandemic research comprehension of schools as contact teaching and daycare facilities. Operational level proved that curriculum worked, utilizing digital competencies and remote, social-distanced work. A remote learning period with the updated data collection was a convincing performance. Education providers' flexibility supported trust and assessment. Constitution mattered in maintaining the social trust, as well.

In conclusion, pandemic policies in the 21st century Nordic countries should not rely on Anglo-Saxon medical reviews' recommendations. Experiences from March-May 2020 offered another evidence. However, further studies will be needed on remote learning, targeting its relatedness. Meanwhile, the national schools don't need to be "national". Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), for

example, could reach billions of pupils beyond boundaries via a single lecture. Instead of seating medical doctors into educational organizations as was proposed in The Lancet (2020), the Nordic country cases suggested the opposite. Behavioral scientists should attend to epidemiologic boards and organs. Especially they would be needed, when the future matters. It would improve the mutual understanding in exceptional circumstances.

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