Co operation for Teacher Profession: Supporting Students to Achieve Teaching Competence

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss partnership in Teacher Education Programme. First, I describe how co operative partnership is organized in Sweden between Universities and municipalities in a partnership area education. Second, I argue that introduction, participating and ending of the partnership area education can be perceived as a process. Last, I argue that the first part, introduction, is more emphasized than the ending from the partnership area and that more emphasise on the ending will give us an increased understanding of how co operation between stake holders in Teacher Education functions.

Key words: Teacher Education Programme, partnership, municipality, process, ending

Introduction

To be a teacher can be perceived as more or less an academic profession. The content and the form of the Teacher education relate to this overarching principle. The consequence is that there are academic stakeholders regarding subjects such as language, history and chemistry, but there are also other stakeholders such as the professionals themselves and employers. These different stakeholders, at the best, are working in collaborative partnerships to support Teacher Education, or rather, that the students will reach the competence needed in a teaching profession.

In some countries Teacher Education Programme includes co operation with different actors outside the University. Whether the co operation, the contract, is negotiated between the University and an individual (such as a teacher) or an organisation (such as a municipality), differs between education systems in Europe. In some countries the students in the Teacher Education Programme start with a theoretical introduction, but soon they meet teachers working in schools, probably employed in the surrounding municipality or those nearby, a so called partnership area.

The aim of this paper is to discuss how partnership can be perceived and discussed. First, I describe how co operative partnership can be organized in Swedish Teacher Education, especially with municipalities. Second, I will argue that introduction, staying and leaving the partnership area can be perceived as a process. Last, I will argue that introduction is more emphasized than leaving the partnership area, and that more emphasise on the leaving can be a pedagogic issue worth while to study. The ending of the relation is the part that is interesting me the most; therefore I will suggest further study on that part of the process.

Organizing co operation

There has been a continuous change in the model of how the Teacher Education Programme in Sweden integrates professionalism during decades in late 20th century. A very early model of integrated the Teacher Education Programme (which was then a College education for teachers at compulsory school) physically with a formal school, sometimes in the same house,
sometimes in a house nearby. The Teacher Students visited selected schools and/or classes in
the nearby area.

Model A - Sweden

| Teacher College | -Schools and teacher | – Teacher Student |

If the student was going to teach older ages University education was regarded as sufficient
and no separate Teacher Education Programme was offered or demanded. Later on the model changed; individual contacts and contracts between Universities and
teachers were added to it. Then there was a direct contact between the University and the
individual teacher that became a mentor for the Teacher Student. At that time teachers for
older ages was included in a Teacher Education Programme, but during a short period.

Model B - Sweden

| University, Teacher Education Programme | – Teacher as individual mentor | – Teacher Student |

Later on the University and the selected schools became separated. The Teacher Students
could spend time in schools far away from the University.

The relation was changed again with the Teacher Programme reform in 2001. The University
offering Teacher Education Programme is now negotiating with municipalities. The
municipalities in their turn offer schools as possible practice places for the Teacher Student.
At the schools the headmaster and the working teams discuss how this assignment should be
carried out. That is, the Student teacher is invited to a working team, not a contact with an
individual teacher. Becoming teachers for all ages are included in a several year Teacher
Education Programme.

Model C - Sweden

| University, Teacher Education Programme | - Municipality | Partnership area |

| - School |
| - Working team of teachers | – Teacher Student |
| - Individual teacher | – Teacher Student |

The difference is that instead of introducing the Teacher Student directly to a profession, the
Teacher Student is introduced to a municipality and then to a profession. This difference is
sometimes seen in how the introduction to the partnership area is carried out. The introduction
can be organized as a course where the Teacher Student first is supposed to get to know the
partnership area (the municipality or a part of it) and second gets to know schools, working
teams and pupils.

The above mentioned change is on a national level. How the cooperation between the
University and the partnership area is organised differ between the approximately 30
Universities that offer Teacher Education Programme. Further on I will use Stockholm
Institute of Education as an example. To support the relation between the Teacher Education
Programme and the municipality a local development team has been established. In the team
there are representatives from the Teacher Education Programme and the municipality. From
the municipality the representatives can be administrators from the municipality and/or teachers. There are often about six persons in the group.

With the new organisation follows at least three organisational levels. The first level is the contract between the University and the municipality, the second is the local development group and the third is at school level.

Model D – Stockholm Institute of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University, Teacher Education Programme</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Partnership area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University, Teacher Education Programme</td>
<td>Local development team</td>
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<tr>
<td>- School</td>
<td>- Teacher Student</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Working team of teachers</td>
<td>- Teacher Student</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Individual teacher</td>
<td>- Teacher Student</td>
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Then of course the school level can be further divided into levels.

The individual Teacher Student is a part of the above mentioned model during between 3 and a half, up to 5 and a half year. The Teacher Student is not always a part of the daily life at school, but visits the school regularly. During the visits the students are carrying out assignment according to directives from the subject teachers and are also, depending on the negotiation with the working team, teaching. At the latest the Teacher Student is practising teaching from the second term.

For the Teacher Student there are relations to different actors, among them the relations in the municipality are probably very important. This brings us to a question about what kind of relations the Teacher Student can develop.

To establish a relation

Participation in Teacher Education Programme means participation in an academic profession education. A part of the profession education includes meeting with the already professional; the teacher at Pre School, Primary and Secondary school. This meeting with the professional is organised within Teacher Education Programme through that the different Universities with Teacher Education Programme have so called partnership areas. One municipality can cover a partnership area, but one or several parts of a municipality can also cover a partnership area. Within the Teacher Education Programme this part of the teacher education is called partnership area education. Co operation between University and partnership areas is organised in local development teams.

A few weeks ago the staff at Stockholm Institute of Education got an e-mail where we were informed about the newly registered Teacher Students. About 1 300 Teacher Students were registered which seems like a casual information and a confirmation of that every thing is as usual. But it is also a reminder of that another round of co operation between the University and the partnership area has to be mobilised.

From autumn 2006 the Teacher Students are expected to choose partnership area, earlier they were directed to one. The Student Teachers can choose between 26 municipalities and because some municipalities are divided into smaller areas the actual choice is between 45
partnership areas. The newcomers are not alone in the partnership areas, all in all there are about 7 000 Teacher Students (2006) in the partnership areas that Stockholm Institute of Education is co-operating with.

The Teacher Students who are registered will form a student generation (the Teacher Student generation of autumn 2006 contains then about 1300 students) who will enter different relations, uphold them and then end the relation. This Teacher Student generation is further on divided in base groups in the partnership area. They will follow their base group during their education.

When the Teacher Students start their Teacher Education they are establishing several relations. With relation I mean that there is some kind of connection between the Teacher Student and other persons. I presume that the Teacher Student meets different persons continuously and have some kind of interaction with this person. It is likely that the Teacher Student establish a relation in the partnership area to the following persons:

- Pupils in one or several classes
- Teachers in one or several working teams
- Representative from the municipality in the local development group
- Teacher Students that are in the same partnership area
- The supervisor of the base group of Teacher Students in the partnership area
- The other Teacher Students in the base group
- Other staff at schools (nurses, administrators)
- Representative from the University in the local development group

There can also be relations to persons outside formal school, such as police officers, leisure time instructors and librarians. A relation is regarded as a long time commitment and can include an emotional dimension.

Function and emotion
It is likely that the relation includes both a functional and an emotional dimension. To have a relation with somebody can imply that two persons are working together and, or taking care of each other. Without creating relations the Teacher Student will have problems with fulfilling assignments during the education and will probably lack a sense of belonging.

You and I
The Teacher Student is expected to follow every day life in school during several years in the partnership area. If every day life in school is followed it is likely that there are classes and individual pupils that the Teacher Student has a high degree of interaction with. Among those pupils there can be someone that the Teacher Student establishes a special relation to. Such relations can imply that a pupil will be especially confirmed, or that the Teacher Student becomes especially confirmed. There will be a “you and I”, maybe us or we. Lars Svedberg (2003) describes human beings need of being confirmed and noticed. In certain cases a pupil end the relation by leaving the school, in other cases it is the Teacher Student that leaves. Of course this kind of relation can also be found in relation to a special supervisor, mentor or to other staff.

Group process
When the Teacher Student is introduced there are already groups where the Teacher Student shall be a part. There is for example staff at the school, working teams and classes. Further on there is the group of all Teacher Students in that special partnership area. These different
groups can be regarded as different working groups. Within these working groups there is a
dynamic group process, according to Kjell Granström (2000). When one or two persons leave
the group the group dynamic process can change. There is a reason to believe that most of the
groups have experiences of ending relations and therefore have developed a kind of ritual for
those situations.

The importance of rituals
One of the most common rituals associated with ending a relation is that an individual or a
group carries out some sort of activity to make clear that something is ended, temporarily
ended or ended for ever. The activity can become a tradition, wherein a ritual can be included.

The concept of ritual has different meanings. Barbro Klein (1995) gives as an example of how
the concept can denote actions within a religious sphere, but a ritual can also be any other
action that is formalised, possible to repeat and in accordance with a pattern. This can be
perceived as the opposite to renewal or change, but an ending can constitute a peak where a
change occurs.

Ending as a peak
An ending can be perceived as a peak or the ultimate test on a relation. A definite goodbye
can also be separated from the earlier endings that are carried out within the partnership area
in relation to different persons. The Teacher Student has to continuously say goodbye
temporarily to pupils and working teams during several years, however not to the base group.
The reason is that they do not stay every day in the partnership area or in the groups. They
participate in partnership area education during a longer coherent period, partly during short
periods. During the shorter visits they can for example experiment with teaching or ask
question to the pupils or the teachers about certain aspects or subjects such as how the pupils
and the teachers perceive homework. At a certain time an ending shall be carried out and all
relations should be completed in the whole partnership area. The ending of partnership area
education can be perceived as a peak where the Teacher Student is getting another role.

One role is changed to another
When the Teacher Student is ending the partnership area education he or she is also ending a
role, the role as a Teacher Student. In some cases the individual is still in the municipality in
the future. Even then I argue that it is reasonable to expect a change in the relation even if the
former Teacher Student changes her or his role to teacher with a teaching contract. In the later
case it is for example the teacher that is signing a contract with the municipality, not the
University.

Advertising Human Relation policy
When municipalities start informing about their participation in Teacher Education
programme it can also be perceived as advertising that the municipality is participating in
development work. To inform about introduction, carrying through and ending of partnership
area education can also be understood as information about how the municipality regards
Human Relation Policy.

Signs of directives for ending a relation
As I was most interested in the ending; I have studied some official documents about how the
partnership area education can, or should be carried out.

National document for Teacher Education programme
The Teacher Education programme is framed by government decision about a new Teacher Degree, University Act, University Ordinance and national Degree System. None of the national documents regulate how partnership area education shall be carried out and as a consequence not how the partnership area education shall be ended.

Stockholm Institute of Education
Every University that offers the Teacher Education Programme also has local goals. In the local goals for Stockholm Institute of Education (Utbildningsplan för programmet för lärarexamen) there is a wording about group processes. The wording clarifies that the student shall have knowledge about leadership and group, about processes in groups and organisations, which could be perceived as also comprising knowledge of ending of a process (Stockholm Institute of Education, 2005). That wording is the closest directives for ending partnership area education that can be found in the document.

At Stockholm Institute of Education there is a Partnership area Education – Centre. The staff in the centre works with information about partnership area education and co operates with the municipalities. At the webpage for Stockholm Institute of Education there is comprehensive information about partnership area education. Most of all the information concerns what partnership area education includes, when partnership area education shall be carried out and how partnership area education shall be reported. Further on the information is dealing what kind of influence the students shall have over their placement (Stockholm Institute of Education, 2006). Ending of partnership area education is not dealt with.

During the time the Teacher Student participates in the Teacher Education Programme there is also documentation of how the partnership area education is carried out. One example is the report that is written each term from partnership area education. From spring 2006 there are especially designed report and evaluation documents for the students to fill in about how the partnership area education is carried out. These documents can be perceived as a step toward ending of partnership area education, however ending is not explicitly dealt with in the documents for evaluation and report.

In the document Partnership area guide for work team and teachers (VFU-guide för arbetstag och lärare, Lärarhögskolan i Stockholm, 2005) there is information about partnership area education for those who are in every day contact with Teacher Students within partnership area education, individual teachers and teachers in working teams. The document deals with content of partnership area education, Teacher Student attendance, expectations of different partners, change of partnership area and also that Teacher Students are introduced through the course Cultural studies in the partnership area (Kulturanalys i partnerområdet). However not how the ending can be carried out.

The course Cultural Analyses in the partnership area
The first introduction to the partnership area is carried out during the course Cultural analyses in the partnership area (Kulturanalys i partnerområdet) which comprises 6 week theory and 4 week partnership area education. 4 week partnership area education includes that the Teacher Students spend a total of 20 days in the partnership area. During these days the partnership area organises activities such as presenting the municipality and especially the education activities. These presentations are called Partnership area days. The group of Teacher Students that are gathered at these days is the group that will continue and meet each other during the entire Teacher Education as a base group. Each term the supervisor from the partnership area is organising four Partnership area days, including four meetings with the
base group. Other social groups are of more temporary nature, such as subject courses. Individual teachers in the course Cultural analysis in the partnership area can of course deal with ending of partnership area education, but there are no such directives in the syllabus or the study plan. The focus is on introduction, not ending.

As a summary, the documents that are studied deals with introduction to partnership area education concerning how it can be carried out, but not explicit how partnership area education can be ended.

Municipalities
Stockholm Institute of Education co operates with 26 municipalities in the Stockholm region. Within these municipalities a partnership area can consist of a part of a municipality. The municipality of Stockholm has for example several parts in Stockholm city that constitute a partnership area.

Actually there are also several other municipalities that are engaged if variations of Teacher Education Programme are regarded. One example is a programme where pre school teachers can participate in further education to get a degree for teaching younger children. In such a case the Teacher Student can be already employed in a municipality in other areas of Sweden. That kind of co operation is not discussed in this paper.

Stockholm County Association of Local Authorities
Stockholm County Association of Local Authorities has information about the co operation between municipalities and Universities. On their webpage it is possible to find links to separate municipalities. In four municipalities, out of 26, there is a link that directly connects to the municipality pages where partnership area co operation is presented. In seven municipalities, out of 26, it was easy to find a further link, such as Teacher Education Programme, Teacher Students or Partnership area Education to come to an page with information about partnership area education (Kommunförbundet i Stockholms län, 2006).

In 2003, 2004 and 2005 Stockholm County Association of Local Authorities followed up how partnership area education was carried out. The presentation of the results describes how the introduction is carried out and there are examples of what partnership area education in general includes. The results show that there are several different actors in the partnership area that the Teacher Students meets, not only an individual teacher. Ending of partnership area education is not dealt with. (Kommunförbundet i Stockholms län, 2003, 2004, 2005).

It was not always obvious from municipalities’ web pages whether the municipality was participating in the Teacher Education programme or not. However, the municipality of Haninge is one of the municipalities that present the co operation with comprehensive information. The municipality has not only co operation with Stockholm Institute of Education but also with other Universities and other educational organisations where students need to participate in practical activities to develop a profession.

Through the web page from Haninge municipality the Teacher Student and other interested can get information about how the partnership area education is organised, calendar for different activities, base group meetings, links to documents for report, information about introduction during the course Cultural Analysis in the partnership area and description of expectations upon different actors. Some other documents uses wording that remind about an
introduction to work in the municipality. Ending of partnership area education is not dealt with (Haninge kommun, 2006).

Stockholm Institute of Education and Stockholm County Association of Local Authorities have published a document called The new Teacher Education Programme, partnership area education (Det nya lärarpromrammet Verksamhetsförlagd utbildning, Lärarhögskolan i Stockholm and Kommunförbundet Stockholms Län, no year). In the document partnership area education is presented, but ending of partnership area education is not presented.

As a summary, ending of partnership area education is not discussed in the documents.

If Stockholm Institute of Education and Stockholm County Association of Local Authorities have given priority to introduction and carrying out partnership area education, why then is the ending interesting? First of all, partnership area education is involved in a continuous development work and from that aspect it is not very alarming that introduction and carrying through is given priority during a phase. On the other hand, I want to highlight the question of ending and argue that a discussion is necessary about how ending is organised.

I argue that the first part, introduction, is more emphasized than the last, the exit, from the partnership area and that more emphasise on the exit will give us an increased understanding of how co-operation between stakeholders in Teacher Education functions. This brings us to a possible research and development question: how is the transfer, the exit, from the municipalities carried out?

Ending a relation as a pedagogic issue

In general there is documentation of introduction and carrying through of partnership area education, but not of ending partnership area education. I argue that teachers in Teacher Education Programme, Teacher Students and representatives from the partnership area has to take into account of how the Teacher Students shall leave every day life in the partnership area, irrespective the reason for leaving.

During 2005 a pilot study was carried out at Stockholm Institute of Education aiming at showing Teacher Student’s ending of the partnership area education. Some questions were sent to representatives from Stockholm Institute of Education in the local development group.

The result of the enquiry showed that the question of ending partnership area education was new to most of the University representatives in the local development groups. The questions, although, led to a discussion within several of the local development groups and there is a great interest in the issue.

To continue studying this issue, I am suggesting some questions regarding ending partnership area education, using present time and the future:

- How is the ending carried out?
- What is the reason to why it is done like this?
- How do different actors wish that the ending should be carried out?
- (If there is a difference compared with what is done) Why do they wish that there should be a change?
With these questions as a point of reference it can be possible to continue a discussion about ending partnership area education. As the partnership area education is a part of the Teacher Education Programme and how it is organised is also an issue of how co operation between a University and a partner is carried out.

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