

Malm, Susanna

## **Bridging programmes for migrant teachers and preschool teachers in Sweden**

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(Hrsg.)

# Inklusion von Lehrkräften nach der Flucht

Über universitäre Ausbildung zum  
beruflichen Wiedereinstieg

Gertraud Kremsner  
Michelle Proyer  
Gottfried Biewer  
(Hrsg.)

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*„Allen Personen gewidmet, die geflüchtet sind, sich derzeit auf der Flucht befinden oder noch flüchten werden.“*

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The painful fact for a refugee or a foreigner is that you will be always looking for a place to belong to, and you will never find it again you will become a foreigner everywhere you go, slowly you will change and do not fit anywhere. and there will always be a black hole. black hole.

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## **Bridging Programmes for Migrant Teachers and Preschool Teachers in Sweden**

### **1 Introduction**

There are several efforts in Sweden, aiming at bridging the gap between the academic and work-based knowledge and experience of migrants and the Swedish requirements in different professional fields. In this chapter, the Swedish system in capturing the skills of migrant academics for use in the Swedish labour market, focusing on migrated teachers and preschool teachers, is described. The Bridging Programmes offer supplementary education for migrants with a teacher's degree from a foreign country. The Bridging Programmes are given at six higher education institutions in Sweden. Initially, a short background of the situation in Sweden and the Swedish government's intentions for allocating resources for bridging programmes is given. Thereafter the supplementary education for migrant teachers and preschool teachers is described: how it is organized at six higher education Institutions.

### **2 Regulated professions and recognition of foreign education in Sweden**

European political frameworks and agreements, such as the Bologna Process, the Lisbon Convention (details of Treaty No. 165; cf. Council of Europe 2018) and the Professional Qualifications Directive (cf. European Parliament and the Council of the European Union 2005), have provided guidelines for how countries should organize the national education systems and schemes for the recognition of foreign education and professional qualifications (cf. Council of Europe 2019). An effective recognition scheme for applicants with foreign education and professional qualifications is an important measure for promoting mobility, both for those who wish to study or work, and for employers and businesses that are looking for qualified labour (cf. Nordic Council of Ministers 2017, 127).



As a result of the global refugee movement, Sweden as in many other countries has received a large number of refugees. The demand for integration into education or the labour market is increasing; furthermore, Sweden has a shortage of work in many different professions, including teachers and preschool teachers.

The Swedish Government, therefore, allocates resources for bridging programmes, aiming at those with foreign (mostly non-European) higher education qualifications and degrees in law, medicine, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering and teaching who need supplementary education in order to engage in professional activities in Sweden. The aim of the bridging programmes is to attain a corresponding Swedish degree or to acquire the knowledge and skills for practising the earlier profession of migrants in Sweden. Providing an opportunity to supplement earlier training can be an important measure for facilitating the integration of those with foreign higher education qualifications. The Swedish government has therefore increased the funding for bridging programmes that have led to an ability both for already existing programmes to grow and for new programmes aimed at other educational backgrounds to be developed (cf. Ministry of Education and Research in Sweden 2016).

### **3 Working as a teacher or a preschool teacher in Sweden – regulated professions**

Within order to gain permanent employment to practice the profession, there is a requirement to have a certification as a teacher or a preschool teacher. The Swedish National Agency for Education<sup>1</sup> has the responsibility for authorization of teachers and preschool teachers and issues diplomas of certification. Teachers with foreign teaching or preschool teaching degrees, who are authorized to work within the profession abroad, can apply for certification at the Agency. To obtain the certification, the migrant teacher has to fulfil specific requirements.

For decisions regarding certifications for teachers and preschool teachers, the Swedish National Agency for Education collaborates with The Swedish Council for Higher Education in the process of assessing foreign education.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.skolverket.se/>

The Swedish Council for Higher Education<sup>2</sup> is the authority responsible for evaluating foreign programme studies on the tertiary level in Sweden.

If the foreign qualification is very different compared to Sweden's teacher qualification requirements, the migrant teacher must supplement his or her education in order to obtain a Swedish teaching or preschool teaching certification. The requirements for supplementary measures, to compensate for the aforementioned differences, can be fulfilled in a variety of ways: a so-called *adaptation period*, aptitude test (EU/EEA- teachers or preschool teachers only) or supplementary studies.

#### **4 Supplementary studies – Bridging Programmes for migrant teachers and preschool teachers**

Since 2007, the Swedish Government has commissioned six universities (University of Gothenburg, Linköping University, Malmö University, Stockholm University, Umeå University, and Örebro University) to provide supplementary education for teachers with foreign qualifications. The allocation of funds has come from special resources, within so-called “integrations bids”. Qualified guidance and study planning always take place in relation to the individual's previous education and work experience. This means that each student receives an individual study plan whose aim is to obtain the above-mentioned certification as a teacher or a preschool teacher.

The supplementary education is regulated by a provision among others, stating that the individual can supplement a maximum of 120 ECTS. The aim of supplementary education is to get the competence to practice the profession as a certified teacher in Sweden.

#### **5 National cooperation**

The bridging programmes are offered at six universities in Sweden regionally dispersed over the country, from Malmö in the southern part of Sweden to Umeå in the north. One of the universities, Stockholm University, is responsible for the national coordination of the programmes and the six universities have formed a national steering group to ensure the equality of the programmes. This implies an equal and legally secure assessment of the students' previous education and experience as grounds for planning supplementary

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.uhr.se/>

studies. The collaboration between the six universities was established in 2007. The collaboration involves working together with other authorities: The Swedish National Agency for Education, The Swedish Council for Higher Education and Teacher Unions.

## **6 Admission requirements**

To be admitted to the programme, the applicant needs a Diploma of Education from a country outside Sweden qualifying the holder to work as a teacher or preschool teacher in the country of education.

In addition, the applicant's proficiency in Swedish must meet the requirements equivalent of an upper secondary (high school) course in Swedish. The individual can study a maximum of 120 ECTS within the bridging programme.

## **7 A short overview of the applicants**

- During 2018, 1031 applications were received at the six universities
- The participants represent teaching degrees from about 90 countries (all continents) and represent all kinds of teachers, from preschool to upper secondary school
- The largest student group has degrees from the Middle East, and Syria has the most participants
- The second largest student group has degrees from Russia

## **8 Structure and content of the supplementary education for teaching and preschool teaching professions**

Study guidance, as well as study planning, takes place with each admitted student. The aim is to bridge the gap between the student's earlier education, including work experience in the field, and the requirements needed for the professional qualification. The individual study plan contains courses with the following content, depending on the aforementioned gap:

- Knowledge in Swedish national regulations and requirements within the areas of preschools, primary schools, and secondary schools
- Subject studies
- Educational sciences
- Internship placement in schools or preschools in Sweden

There is also a joint introductory course for a group of students containing elements aimed to improve the student's language comprehension, both concerning oral proficiency and academic writing, in a Swedish academic context. Thereafter the students continue their studies according to an individual study plan.

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