

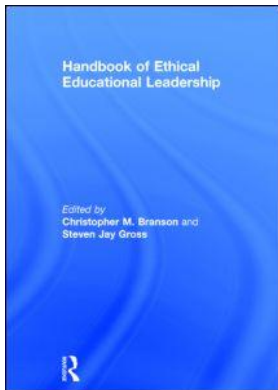
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THE ETHICAL DEMANDS OF MULTICULTURALISM

KATARINA NORBERG AND OLOF JOHANSSON

The school is an important institution wherein political intentions about what characterizes good civic education and training are expected to be realized. Also, according to Bunar (2001), “It is a place for political aspirations and reforms through which children and young people with different social backgrounds should be given opportunities to transcend the social background constraints” (p. 18). The Swedish School Act, and curricula¹ based on its principles, has a long history of underscoring these purposes of schooling, as they have emphasized the schools’ democratic mission. However, a discrepancy exists between the intention formulated at the central level and its realization at the local level, as differences between overall school performance and the performance of groups of students have increased. This chapter discusses this inconsistency with a focus on school leadership in ethnic multicultural schools. It opens with a brief account of the Swedish school’s democratic mission to promote equal schooling for all students, followed by a description of student performances from a multicultural perspective and school leaders’ experiences of leadership for diversity. The chapter ends by highlighting intercultural leadership and providing some examples of how Sweden’s principal training program is intended to educate school leaders for diversity.

THE SWEDISH SCHOOL’S DEMOCRATIC MISSION

The Swedish school’s democratic mission began with the commission for elementary school education in 1914, emphasizing the importance of learning to be an active member of society (Folkskolekommittén, 1914). The 1946 School Commission followed Dewey’s (1916/1966) argument that “a democratic society can only be created by education” (p. 87) and affirmed that the school’s primary task was to foster democratic human beings. The commission asserted that citizens in a democratic society must have open and critical minds that resist undemocratic

ideas. As democratic states have no use for selfish masses of people, the democratic school's primary task is to develop free people for whom cooperation is a need and creates happiness. From this text, developed during the Second World War and published just after peace came to Europe, it is obvious that schooling was treated as a moral project. These formulations in the School Commission's report remain valid today, in that school politics are always up for debate in Swedish society (Johansson & Svedberg, 2013).

The ideas of the School Commission were widely accepted in the parliament, but at the time, Sweden had a school system that sorted children in relation to their maturity and theoretical skills regarding different school subjects. Radical changes would not emerge in the school system for another 15 years. In the early 1960s, school classes became uniformly grouped by age for all schoolchildren between years 1 and 9, and 9 years of compulsory schooling became mandatory for all children. In this system, children were still divided in some subjects in relation to their maturity and theoretical skills. In the revised School Act and the new curricula, we can identify some of the thinking promoted by the school commission. However, the biggest change took effect when a new governing system was introduced in the public sector during the 1990s. The old regulating system, with its many laws and rules, was abolished and replaced with goals and objectives defined by the political level for each public sector. The new governing system came into the education sector in 1994, when the government issued curricula that were adjusted to goals and objectives. The 1994 curricula clearly explained that schools should work both with academic and social goals. The curriculum for the Swedish compulsory school (in which students usually begin at age 6 or 7 and finish at age 15 or 16) is divided into three sections: *basic school values and the school mission*; *general educational goals and guidelines*; and *syllabuses and knowledge demands*. The government, except for the knowledge demands, which are injunctions set by the National Agency for Education (Skolverket), determines these.

During the closing decades of the 20th century, internationalization through immigration became evident and it was generally accepted that students should be prepared for a life with people of other cultures, emphasizing equality, solidarity, and joint responsibility (Nilsson, 1997). The current curricula and the School Act stipulate that the school must impart such a worldview and shape pupils to these fundamental values upon which their society is based. The key reference points are the inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men, and solidarity with the weak and vulnerable (Skollagen, 2010: 800 [Education Act]; Skolverket [National Agency of Education], 2010, 2011a, 2011b). This prescription applies to all staff employed in schools as well as pupils. These values are meant to saturate all school activities and constitute a common frame of reference. All who work in schools should uphold the stated values and should, as the curricula explains, "very clearly disassociate themselves from anything that conflicts with these values" (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 10).

Curricula based on these principles also promote an equivalent and equitable education for all, with the understanding that education should be adapted to each pupil's circumstances and needs, based on the pupil's background, earlier experiences,

language, and knowledge, irrespective of where in the country it is provided. How this should be realized is up to the principal and teachers to interpret, based on the local school context, wherein school leaders, teachers, children, adolescents, and their guardians each have unique experiences and qualities that characterize their perceptions of what is right and wrong; what is good education, knowledge, and learning; what causes learning disabilities; and what is needed to overcome learning difficulties.

AN EQUIVALENT AND EQUITABLE SCHOOL FOR ALL?

A substantial task for the school's leader is to develop the school's culture, structure, and organization to promote diversity from a number of aspects, such as ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, and sexual orientation. This task is not unique to Sweden. Schools are in general viewed as important social institutions, and education in particular is viewed as "a primary means of facilitating the harmonious development of a diverse society" (Lumby & Heystek, 2011, p. 5). Promoting diversity in schools is not an easy task, however, since school leaders, teachers, students, and guardians come together with different gender, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds, all of which influence their respective values concerning teaching and foster a context in which these differences should not negatively affect students' education. However, schools are in general characterized as monocultural, with assimilation as an underpinning goal, whereas students with migrant backgrounds are described from a deficit perspective as "different" compared with the "ordinary" or "normal" Swedish student (Bouakaz, 2007; Gruber, 2007; Sawyer & Kamali, 2006; Runfors, 2007). This assertion is supported by Johansson, Davis, and Geijer (2007), who report an example of a monocultural organization in an ethnic multicultural school that welcomes diversity in its rhetoric while, in practice, it demonstrates a desire for assimilation. As Lahdenperä (2006) puts it, "Swedishness is the starting point for norms, ideals or goals for remedial measures and teaching" (p. 92).

This viewpoint is reflected in periodic reports from the Swedish National Agency, which demonstrates problematic statistics of students' scores from a multicultural perspective (Skolverket, 2004, 2005, 2009a, 2009b, 2009d, 2013). Despite a gradual increase in students' academic achievement since 1998, the following figures show that the distribution in performance among pupils has increased and there is still a strong correlation between socioeconomic background and how students succeed in schools. Students from a migrant background, as a group, have lower grades compared with ethnic Swedes and are overrepresented in the group that is not eligible to apply for higher education.

It is doubtful, however, whether the relationship between low achievement and the percentage of pupils from a migrant background in schools presents a true picture of the problem (Gunter, 2006). The composition of the immigrant students can vary at different times; the school's finances affect what resources the school can offer; and language-teaching arrangements can affect student performance. An immigrant background is important if the student has recently arrived in Sweden when grades are assessed—the student who arrives in Sweden at the age of 12 will have had very

few years of experience, in either the Swedish school system or the Swedish language, when assessed in year 9.

Thus, it is not the migrant background itself that contributes to more students in this group leaving school with incomplete grades. Socioeconomic factors largely affect the students' school achievement, and taking this into account removes the differences in the ratings results between ethnic Swedish pupils and those with an immigrant background (Skolverket, 2004, 2005, 2009b). Students whose parents have a low education level generally have lower grades than those with highly educated parents. This tendency becomes particularly evident at the school level when increased residential segregation is implemented, which in turn might have an impact on the family's integration into Swedish society. Also, there are examples of successful schools in very challenging circumstances due to their inner structure and work culture. Thus, an explanation for school results should also be related to the school's inner work, not only to surrounding circumstances (Gu & Johansson, 2012). The opportunity for parents to choose a school has contributed to increased school segregation, which in turn has resulted in segregation when it comes to students' motivation for learning, since highly motivated students tend to use the option to choose a particular school. When students with special needs are gathered in schools and classrooms, there is a risk that they will influence each other negatively and that teachers have low expectations of their opportunities for learning and development (Bouakaz, 2007; Skolverket, 2009d, 2013).

Furthermore, regarding gender, girls earn higher average grades than boys, except in physical education, and the gap is continuing to increase. One explanation for the rating differences may be that for boys, masculine identity is important and this can be illustrated by performing well in physical education (Hedin, 2004; Skolverket, 2009d; SOU, 2009²). Meanwhile, it may be seen as "girlish" for boys to study and earn high scores on the other, more academic tests.

The above statistics illustrate Swedish school performance trends and show how the student's background is one significant variable. The remainder of this chapter illustrates school leaders' experiences within diverse school settings, how intercultural leadership could prevent variation in school performances, and what efforts are made in this area through national-level regulations and in-service training for principals.

DIVERSITY AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The following quotes exemplify how school leaders perceive what they have to deal with in an ethnically diverse school, where increased immigration from outside Europe has sharply raised the multicultural issue (Norberg, 2009, p. 4):

I have to map out my school from a cultural perspective; I have to examine how we treat our pupils; How do we prepare a parental meeting and how do we know the parents understand us?; I have to elucidate the school's values and their concrete signification

Ethnic and religious diversity, and the increasing percentage of students with traditions and languages originating from outside Sweden, have combined to challenge

a traditional presumption of homogeneity in Swedish society and have evoked the need for educational changes. Nonetheless, there is a lack of studies of educational leadership in ethnic multicultural schools in Sweden. Findings by Bunar (2009) provide an overview of some of the problems and opportunities in this field.

School leaders in Bunar's (2009) study³ do not consider students' multicultural composition as problematic per se; they see housing segregation, unemployment, low education, and exclusion of many immigrant families as important factors that affect the school's inner workings. In segregated school districts, there is a sense of vulnerability among school leaders when parents have the option to move their children to schools with a better reputation and more ethnic Swedish students. Bad reputations and bias toward ethnic multiculturalism contribute to departure from the local school, based on the idea that the more Swedish students, the better. The simultaneous never-ending stream of new students with different backgrounds and special needs into a multicultural school leads to difficulties for the principal in planning for staff recruitment, school improvement strategies, and spending, which negatively influences the school's capacity for change (Bunar). There is a sort of "resigned logic" among school leaders, who on the one hand are convinced of their school's excellence and believe that the students who change schools will surely not receive a better situation in their new schools, while on the other hand the school leaders have difficulty in keeping up with the competition due to prejudice and negative perceptions of schools in multicultural districts, no matter what improvements are made.

The school leaders, in Bunar's (2009) study, believe that their schools meet the demands due to competent teachers, without ignoring the problems that exist both within the school and in the school district. Still, they find themselves caught up in an array of migration and integration policies, the structure of housing, labor market conditions, "individuals' aspirations, the different groups' demands for cultural recognition and the society's symbolic hierarchies" (p. 110), and an image presented by the media, politicians, and other citizens who present the school and the district in negative terms. In the midst of these heavy demands stands the school leader with a mission to create an inclusive school. Such leaders express a feeling that they have reached the "tipping point" when it comes to students with immigrant backgrounds, saying, "Now enough is enough," meaning they should offer a high-quality education but also be able to face the competition and not prevent students from leaving the school because of the high proportion of migrant students. Bunar raises the critical question of what percentage of immigrant students is enough, and in relation to what? The school leader who does not count the percentage of pupils with a migration background and instead works from the current reality has, according to Bunar, encountered an important barrier in handling the school's conditions. Also, Lahdenperä (2008) finds that school staff do not understand how the student body has changed in recent years, which has caused serious problems in adapting staff work to new conditions. She found a nostalgic longing for the days of a student body that teachers recognized, and a "the sooner the better" attitude regarding a return to such conditions (p. 76).

Several of the principals in Bunar's study were not quite clear about the school's role in inclusivity regarding what and how the school could work to promote inclusion.

In practice, inclusion usually meant internal strategies that focused on language issues (i.e., teachers were trained in teaching Swedish as a second language as well as the language's linguistic dimension, with the aim of promoting students' language development in Swedish and integrating their mother tongues into the curricula). However, the principals also highlighted another strategy that they regarded as successful: increased and improved interaction with parents. In addition to information about students' school performance, including their difficulties and opportunities as well as the school's inner workings, Bunar (2009) argues that enhanced and open cooperation with parents has an impact on students as well as the local community. A school to be proud of is an important symbol that spills over to the entire district. By inviting parents to participate in genuine collaboration, parents can be encouraged to take a greater responsibility for their children's education, which in turn has a democratic value. Moreover, the school then has the potential to strengthen the parents with both parenting advice and providing important community information they have difficulty getting from anywhere else. This assertion is supported by international research showing that good and respectful relations with students' guardians are important for students' learning (Day & Leithwood, 2007; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Pashiardis, Savvides, Lytra, & Angelidou, 2011). However, Bunar is dubious that the aforementioned strategies are enough to promote students' learning. The reinforced learning strategies must be used in collaboration among schools and provide students and parents with what they want: more Swedes. This is not to reject their school's activities but to increase the school's symbolic capital and strengthen their credibility.

The principal has ultimate responsibility for how learning is organized and has individual values, knowledge, and experiences that coincide with school leadership task significance. Decisions can be carefully designed based on cultural, pedagogical, and didactic skills or influenced by bias, subjective feelings, and beliefs. Disagreements may occur regarding which professional qualifications the school staff need, how a class is designed based on students' needs, how schedules that support learning are designed, which types of training teachers need, and what characterizes a professional approach toward students and guardians. A pedagogy that supports diversity and prevents the reproduction of stereotypes of "the Other" (i.e., one who is different from members of the majority culture, challenging traditional and stereotypical notions of what is "good" and "right"), as well as gender stereotypes, is encouraged by school leaders who believe that diversity is an important issue and who have knowledge of, and dedication to, the subject, while school leaders who regard acknowledgment of diversity and gender equity as irrelevant to student learning and development pay such pedagogy less or no attention.

LEADERSHIP FOR DIVERSITY

Lahdenperä (2006, 2008) advocates an intercultural perspective based on democratic values such as equality and respect for all humans and their different needs and life values. This perspective focuses on challenging an ethnocentric attitude wherein the majority's values and experiences take precedence and on recognizing diversity in all

its forms: gender identity, social origin, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. In this way, diversity becomes a central part of education.

Through an intercultural education, individual values are challenged and reviewed in relation to the professional mandate and the various implications and conflicting perspectives that exist in the organization. A difficulty arises when the majority of the school's teachers and leaders represent the Swedish majority culture from an ethnic and class perspective. Curricula, policy documents, timetables, textbooks, teaching aids, rules, staff recruitment, in-service training, and other elements of a school then build on and reinforce the mainstream culture's assumptions of learning and socialization. The school leader must therefore "walk the diversity walk" and welcome different perspectives and voices into the organization (Grobler, Moloï, Look, Bisschoff, & Mestry, 2006). If diversity is not recognized and welcomed into the rooms in which negotiations and decision making take place, established hierarchies and normative assumptions of learning will remain (Gunter, 2006; Lahdenperä, 2006). Recognition implies not only using diversity as a basis for learning, but also "using its structures, cultures and systems to think beyond its structures, cultures and systems" (Leo & Barton, 2006, p. 178). Or, as Lahdenperä (2008) suggests, "to actively lead the multicultural school development requires both an understanding beyond the ethnocentrism and some 'multicultural' maturity in the staff group" (p. 22).

A significant manifestation of how different value systems, beliefs, and perceptions create different dilemmas for school leaders and educators is how honor-related problems are interpreted and handled in schools (Darvishour, Lahdenperä, & Lorentz, 2010). Above all, girls are subjected to more control and restrictions in their daily lives at or outside school compared with boys, who in turn also undergo restrictions (Alizadeh, Hylander, Kocturk, & Törnkvist, 2010). These problems must be handled carefully to avoid a situation in which xenophobic actors are able to argue for restrictive migration policies. The recognition of the problem must be discussed in a way that does not create or strengthen an us-versus-them attitude with careless generalizations about immigrants and their traditions. Rather, these dilemmas should be understood as illustrating how various core values can collide in schools and therefore should be discussed seriously. The life conditions for those who live in honor cultures must be recognized to ensure that these students have access to the same legal protections as other young men and women. In schools, the principals have the utmost responsibility for ensuring this protection with support from governing documents. A significant question is whether the school's organization and culture contribute to marginalization of families with immigrant backgrounds, which in turn might lead to a repudiation of the school's values and assignments by these families in order to protect traditions.

If a homogeneous group of school leaders and educators define problems and solutions and make assessments of performance, there is a risk that some questions will never be asked. The organization must therefore invite various perspectives and voices to challenge ingrained ways of thinking (Arvastson & Ehn, 2007; Grobler et al., 2006). In addition to service programs in intercultural education, a recruitment of teachers from different social classes and ethnicities, with disabilities and different sexual orientations, might be of importance in reflecting and representing the student body more accurately. Representing a variety of

experience and knowledge in teacher teams can avoid a monocultural education that positions Swedish, white, heterosexual, and middle class as the norm. The underpinning idea of how teaching teams are composed and how the representatives of various working groups are appointed is therefore important to how pedagogical issues are addressed. A multicultural representation might increase the opportunities to meet students with an understanding of their social, cultural, and individual differences.

Given the statistics above, and the challenges school leaders are facing in their mission to support equity in teaching and education in a school saturated by democratic values, how is principal training in Sweden linked to this assignment?

PRINCIPAL TRAINING IN SWEDEN

Principal leadership has been a frequent topic of attention in the Swedish school development arena for at least 4 decades. Leadership training is often described as a key solution to educational shortcomings and is expected to provide a legitimate basis for new leadership approaches and new forms for governing and regulating schools in a late modern society. Hence, this part of the chapter focuses on the design and experiences of leadership training in relation to equity and social justice, with a concentration on the background of the new National School Leadership Training Program for principals that was launched in late 2009.

In 1986, the Swedish parliament decided on a broader integrated program of school principal training, with the state and municipalities assuming responsibility for different parts of the training. The municipalities were tasked with providing a recruitment training program and an introductory training program; the state was tasked with providing a National Principals Training Program; and universities were tasked with providing continuing school leader training and master programs. The purpose of this entire initiative was to give principals a thorough understanding of the national goals of the school and equip them with leadership skills that would stimulate the development of school activities.

The third program mentioned above—the National Principals Training Program did function very well, in part because the state, through the National Agency for Schools, assumed responsibility for organizing the principals' training and was given sufficient resources to run the program at selected universities. The fourth program, which provided academic master-level courses, has also been delivered at different universities. Unfortunately, these courses have not been able to attract a large number of principals for continued school leader education (Johansson, 2001).

In 2007, a new program was outlined in a committee report, *Clearer Leadership in Schools and Preschools—A Proposal for a New Training Program for Principals* (Ds 2007:34, 2007⁴). The committee identified the following issues from reflecting on the previous initiative:

- Legal aspects of managing and leading schools have not been paid enough attention.
- Issues about how the national goals can be followed up and evaluated as a basis for school improvement have not been prioritized enough.

- The differences among the various universities delivering the initiative are too great.
- The capacity is too small—principals must wait too long before entering the programs in the initiative.

On behalf of the ministry of education, the National Agency for Education commissioned six universities in 2009 to run the National Principals Training Program. This primarily residential program runs for over 3 years, over 36 meeting days, and is open to principals, preschool principals, and deputy principals who are already in service. Principals appointed after March 2010 must complete the program within 4 years. All participants are expected to use 20% of their time studying. The course itself is free of charge, but the participants' organizations pay residential, travel, and literature expenses.

New cohorts enter the program twice annually. By May 2013, about 5,700 principals and deputy principals had enrolled, and of these, about 1,900 had finished the program. This represents approximately 60% of all 8,000 principals and deputy principals in Sweden.

The intentions of the new National Principals Training Program are described by the National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2009c):

Principals need to understand both their own role and that of the school, share the fundamental values governing how the school works, and be able to transform these values into concrete actions.

The National School Leadership Training Program aims to provide support for head teachers in carrying out their functions. The training program covers three areas of knowledge:

- Legislation on schools and the role of exercising the functions of an authority
- Management by goals and objectives
- School leadership

These areas of knowledge are crucial for the practical implementation of school leadership. They are closely linked to each other, and head teachers must be able to manage them simultaneously, since they form parts of a complex interacting system.

The topic of *legislation on schools and the role of exercising the functions of an authority* covers the provisions laid down in laws and ordinances, with emphasis on how a school's assignment is formulated in the national goals. The knowledge area of *management by objectives and results* covers measures for promoting quality that is required for the school to achieve the national goals for education. The knowledge area of *school leadership* covers how the work should be managed based on the national tasks of the head teacher and the principals set out in the steering system for bringing about development in line with greater attainment of goals.

The above knowledge goals are formulated in relation to each of these areas, but in this context, it is more important that goals are also formulated in relation to the following.

Skills and Abilities

On completion of the training, the head teacher shall demonstrate the ability to:

- Apply knowledge of applicable legislation in the school district, as well as make assessments
- Communicate and apply knowledge of existing legislation in the school district
- Explain the goals of the school, make them clear, and transform them into concrete actions
- Communicate the national goals
- Use different tools and methods to follow up and evaluate results of the school
- Compile, analyze, and interpret the school's results
- Manage and delegate work to other teaching staff to maximize the learning and development of pupils
- Motivate, initiate, and manage the school's development processes in a strategic way in order to encourage the interest of school personnel in learning and development
- Manage and resolve conflicts
- Communicate future plans and visions
- Communicate goals and results to pupils in the school, to personnel, and to parents
- Apply the principle of the equal value of all people

Assessment Ability and Approaches

On completion of the training, the head teacher shall demonstrate the ability to:

- Make assessments in the area of school legislation with respect to the legal security of pupils and relevant scientific, societal, and ethical aspects
- Exhibit good leadership abilities for integrating the school's daily work with pupils' results and development of quality in the school
- Evaluate and communicate the school's results as a basis for further development
- Provide explicit focus on the national assignment of the school
- Provide a democratic model to pupils and personnel by creating an open, communicative climate
- Clearly emphasize the importance of cooperation
- Involve the participation of pupils and parents in the work of the school
- Give appropriate prominence to the values laid down in the school's steering documents

To introduce *skills and abilities* as well as *assessment ability and approaches* as clear goals of the program is a challenge for the educators in the principal training centers at universities, as it requires a strong message from the political level that the principal's function and role will be evaluated in relation to performance with the schoolchildren.

In Sweden, it is becoming increasingly obvious how education is negotiated and conditioned in and among three dimensions: politics/profession, national intentions/

local conditions, and public education/private education. The governing of schools has drifted from government toward governance, meaning that more interactive processes are being introduced with a new focus on performance measures. These radical changes of the educational scene call for another approach to train principals (Johansson & Svedberg, 2013).

CONCLUSION

We conclude by mentioning three examples of special training for principals that will prepare them to handle ethical matters better, all financed by the National Agency for Education. Our first example dates back about 10 years, when the principal training centers at universities were asked to plan and conduct courses in relation to the basic democratic values in the curriculum. These courses were given over a period of 4 years, with the purpose of integrating this subject focus into the regular principal training programs. The second example of special training courses is principal development in relation to how different value systems, beliefs, and perceptions can create different dilemmas for school leaders and educators concerning how honor-related problems are interpreted and handled in schools. Our third example relates to an old phenomenon that has changed in character: During the last 50 years, Sweden has always had immigrant children in its schools, but the number has increased substantially in recent years, and school administrations and the government have also identified a new and growing group of young immigrants who still are schoolchildren and are coming without their parents, mostly as refugees. Again, the principal centers are asked to provide education that is appropriate for this new situation.

The goals for the principal training program and the last three examples of additional in-service programs all build on the administrative and political belief that informed and effective school leadership is part of the solution for the different challenges to our democratic system. While the goals and guidelines in the principal training program do not explicitly emphasize the multicultural school context and its challenges, against this background we can argue that there is a strong awareness in Swedish society to link school actions to the pedagogical ideas formulated after the Second World War. Again, as citizens in a democratic society, we must help our students to develop open and critical minds that resist undemocratic ideas. Democratic states have no use for selfish masses of people; therefore, the democratic school's primary task is to develop free people for which cooperation is a need and creates happiness.

NOTES

1. The Swedish curricula for the school system are regarded as documents that contain educational goals and guidelines for preschool, preschool class, compulsory school, leisure time center, and upper secondary school.
2. SOU is an abbreviation for Swedish Government Official Report (Statens offentliga utredning).
3. Bunar's (2009) findings come from a study in two school districts with socioeconomic and ethnic diversity. This chapter presents some of his findings from interviews with 14 school leaders of interest.
4. Ds is an abbreviation for Ministry publications series (Departementsserien).

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