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A history of sermons and carrots but no sticks

Educational policies on second foreign languages in Sweden

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Abstract: This paper is concerned with a historical analysis of educational policies on Modern languages or second foreign languages (SFLs) like French, German and Spanish in Sweden. Using a typology from policy instrument theory, colloquially phrased as *sermons*, *carrots* and *sticks*, the paper provides an historical overview and a discussion of acess policy objectives and policy instruments since 1945 with a particular focus on lower secondary school the last 20 years. The analysis shows that while policies and policy instruments naturally have varied over the last 70 years, there are also similarities. A finding is that in the domain of SFLs, sermons have not been perceived as enough, carrots have tended to lead to inequalities and sticks have been avoided.

Keywords: Sweden, second foreign language, educational policy, policy instruments

Résumé: Cet article propose une analyse historique des politiques éducatives des langues modernes, plus précisément la deuxième langue étrangère par exemple le français, l'allemand et l'espagnol, en Suède. Nourrie d'une typologie d'instruments de l'action publique, dont les catégories dans un langage familier sont surnommées *sermons*, *carottes* et *bâtons*, l'article propose une vue d'ensemble et une discussion des objectifs de la politique éducative du domaine et les instruments utilisés pour les atteindre depuis 1945 avec une attention particulière au collège et les 20 dernières années. Notre analyse montre que même si les politiques et les instruments ont évidemment varié au cours de cette période de 70 années, il y a aussi des similarités. Une observation est que dans le domaine de la deuxième langue étrangère, les sermons n'ont pas été perçus comme étant suffisants, les carottes ont eu tendance à mener à des inégalités et les bâtons ont été évités.

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Mots clés: la Suède, deuxième langue étrangère, politique éducative, instruments de l'action publique

Sammanfattning: Artikeln presenterar en historisk analys av utbildningspolicy inom området moderna språk, särskilt det andra främmande språket som t ex franska, tyska och spanska, i Sverige. Utifrån en typologi för policyinstrument vars kategorier populärt kan beskrivas som *moroten*, *piskan* och *predikan*, ger artikeln en översikt över utbildningspolicy på området och instrument som använts för att nå dem sedan 1945 med ett särskilt fokus på grundskolan och de senaste 20 åren. Analysen visar att policymålen och instrumenten naturligt nog varierat under 70 år men det finns också likheter över hela perioden. En observation är att när det gäller det andra främmande språket har predikan inte uppfattats som tillräcklig, morötter tenderar att leda till ojämlikheter medan piskan har undvikits.

Nykelord: Sverige, det andra främmande språket, utbildningspolicy, policyinstrument

1 Introduction

This paper is concerned with educational policies on Modern languages or second foreign languages (SFLs) like French, German and Spanish in Sweden. Foreign language education in Sweden has a strong tradition. As a country with a comparatively small national language, the need for Swedes to master foreign languages has been acknowledged for a long time (Cabau-Lampa 2005). Consequently, there is a need for a well-developed and active language policy. Indeed, in some areas Sweden has a long-standing tradition of an active language policy (Oakes 2001; Hult 2004). The Home Language Reform, originally implemented already in 1977/1978, states that immigrant children have the right to study their mother tongue in Swedish schools (Boyd and Huss 2001). Sweden signed and ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Year 2000. Together with a heated debate on threats to Swedish as the national language (e.g. domain losses to English, competence attrition, signs of diglossia, Teleman and Westman 1997), the signature lead to the Language Act (Ministry of culture 2009) which came into force in 2009. It states, for the first time ever, that "Swedish is the principal language in Sweden" (section 4) and that "The national minority languages are Finnish, Yiddish, Meänkieli (Tornedal Finnish), Romany Chib and Sami" (section 7).

Foreign languages are not mentioned in the current *Language Act*. In the Government bill adopted in 2005 - entitled Best Language: A Concerted Language Policy for Sweden (Bästa språket: En samlad svensk språkpolitik) – four objectives for language policy in Sweden were legislated:

Everyone is to have the right to language: to develop and learn Swedish, to develop and use their own mother tongue and national minority language, and to have the opportunity to learn foreign languages. (Government bill 2005/06:2: 14)

However, in the Government bill that a few years later became the *Language act*, it was concluded that there were "not enough reasons" (Government bill 2008/ 09:153:43) to include the right to learn foreign languages in the Language Act. Instead, foreign language policy is and has always been a concern for the educational system in Sweden, as is the case in most countries according to Spolsky and Lambert (2006). Compared to language policies in other areas, Spolsky and Lambert find that foreign language policies are:

[...] less developed and conflicted than, policies with respect to national language(s) and those of intra-country minorities. They also tend to be given less attention in scholarly analyses of language policy. In addition, such policies tend to be piecemeal rather than coordinated. (Spolsky & Lambert, 2006: 570)

Indeed, when considering the vast literature on language-in-education policies (e.g. Tollefson, 2002, Liddicoat, 2013) or language acquisition management (LAM) (e.g. Baldauf et al., 2008) there is comparatively little research focusing specifically on foreign language policies in education (but see e.g. van Els, 1994, 2005, Mitchell, 2009 for notable exceptions). Instead, current theoretical discussions of LAM typically do not separate between 'types' of languages (i.e. national, minority, heritage, foreign etc) even though some policy areas are potentially more relevant to foreign languages than others. One such area identified by Kaplan & Baldauf (2005) which will be central to this paper is access policy, i.e. the question of who should study which language when and for how long. With respect to second or foreign languages, van Els (2005) argues that access policy should be based on a needs analysis at the national level:

The second languages that are provided for in the educational system should be selectd in such a way that the country's current and future needs for second languages are satisfied in optimal ways. (van Els, 2005: 974)

In her review of contemporary foreign language education policies, Mitchell (2009:89) does indeed find that at least in the European context, it is clearly instrumental goals that are currently driving the development of foreign language education policy with respect to language choice(s) and amount of time devoted to foreign language study. Van Els takes as his point of departure the traditional nation-level second/foreign language status planning (van Els, 2005: 972). For reasons of space, the mangagement perspective will also dominate in the current paper even though current models of language policy are more complex and acknowledge agents at different interacting levels. Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy involve three inter-related components: practices, beliefs and management. Practices are concerned with behavior and choices that language users make and beliefs about language(s) are important for the values that we assign to language(s) and ultimately for the construction and maintenance of identity. Spolsky (2007) shows that within a particular domain (e.g. home, school, church etc) each of these three components will exerce pressure on language choices. With respect to the school domain, Spolsky (2007: 7) says that it "proves to be the most complex" with different participants (i.e. students, teachers, school leaders etc) and authorities at different levels (i.e. national, regional, municipality, school) exerting influence on choices and implementation. However, Spolsky (2007: 11) finds that, in the end, "schools reflect the ideological position of those who control them" and it is rare that linguistic or educational considerations will ultimately determine the language policy. As a result, conflicts in the school domain are frequent. The emphasis on conflict or rather its opposite – consensus – is echoed in the conclusion of Mitchell's (2009:98) review of contemporary foreign language policies in education when she finds that successful foreign language policies "cannot be imposed by 'bureaucrats' and ideologists, but require a reasonable consensus among students, parents and the wider community to take root and deliver a measure of foreign language learning" with English as a foreign language as the current most prominent example of a success story.

The current paper is concerned with an historical review of acess policies with respect to SFLs in the Swedish educational system. I will mainly adopt a management perspective at the national level, but with some outlooks to practices and beliefs of agents at other societal levels as well. While policy decisions and objectives will be central to the review, I will also be focusing on the *instruments* that Governments have used in order to achieve these goals. Since SFLs have been and still are a concern for education, the policy instruments available to the Government in order to regulate access policies are educational policy instruments. Policy instruments or policy tools can be defined as combinations of "practical, intentional and administrative actions" (Salazar-Morales 2018) that governments employ to achieve policy goals in specific social domains. Bemelmans-Videc, Rist & Vedung (1998) have proposed a widely cited threefold typology to describe the different instruments that Governments normally have at their disposal: persuasion, incentives and controls or, using language that is more colloquial, sermons, carrots and sticks. In brief, persuasions or sermons involve informing the target population about facts related to the issue at stake through communication campaigns, labelling or educational efforts to make people understand the benefits of

a particular behaviour. It also involves informing and reminding the public about what the policy target is, i.e. the objective to achieve. Differently from persuasion, Governments use incentives or carrots to induce change in a target population through the conditional transfer of some kind of value, often of economic nature (e.g. exemption of taxes). A fundamental assumption behind the use of incentives is the idea that some people are "utility maxi-misers" (Salazar-Morales 2018) and are not likely to change behaviour solely on the bases of exhortations. Finally, controls or sticks is the most constraining public policy tool in the toolbox and uses authority-based coercion as its basis. In the domain of educational policy, all kinds of compulsory measures can be qualified as sticks. Crucial to the success of sticks is the perception of legitimacy and support among the public (Salazar-Morales 2018: 461). If people do not accept the restrictions of the authorities, they stand little chances of being accepted or maintained over time.

The aim of the present paper is to review access policy goals with respect to SFLs and the instruments used to obtain them after 1945 in Sweden and to discuss them within the framework of policy instruments of Bemelmans-Videc et al (1998). The focus will be on compulsory school, which in the case of SFLs means lower secondary school (age 12 to 15 years). Looking at the period from 1945, the research questions are threefold:

- What were the objectives of the educational policy with respect to SFLs?
- 2) Which type of policy instruments were used and why?
- 3) What were the consequences of these instruments?

The history of foreign language education and foreign language teaching in Sweden has been the topic of several previous publications (Tornberg 1997; Cabau-Lampa 2005, 2007; Tholin and Lindqvist 2009; Tholin 2019). Therefore, I will only quickly review the earlier periods focusing on facts needed to answer the research questions (Section 2). Comparatively less has been written on the situation after year 2000 when the Swedish Government introduced a new type of measure. Consequently, I will discuss in more detail the current situation and consequences of the current policy (Section 3). The discussion and conclusion (Section 4) will summarize the findings and discuss to what extent the underlying ideology with respect to SFLs in Sweden has remained the same over the years.

2 A brief historical overview of second foreign language education in Sweden

Second foreign language education in post-secondary war Sweden can roughly be divided into three periods. The periods are defined following the introduction of new curricula involving major changes with respect to SFLs. The focus of this overview is the educational system, policy goals and the instruments used to achieve them. For reasons of space, teaching and assessment methods will not be included (but see Cabau-Lampa 2005 and 2007 for details).

2.1 The period after WW2 - SFLs as a screening instrument

With the 1946 School Commission, Sweden saw for the first time a unique and compulsory school system. A new Europe was being built after WW2 and the School Commission stresses internationalization and collaboration as key to the development and prosperity of Swedish society. In this context, foreign languages (FLs) are deemed central, "a window to the world". Learning a FL should no longer be reserved to a small elite and it is decided that English is the first foreign language. The subject is made mandatory from 1949 in Years 5 to 7 (age 11-13 years). German was an optional second foreign language (starting in Year 7) and with more hours than French that could only be chosen in Year 9 (age 15). However, both the choice of English as the first FL and its mandatory status were debated at the time. Traditionally, German had been the first FL in Sweden, but English was now favoured primarily because it was perceived to be the most useful FL for the general public. With respect to the mandatory status, a clear majority of English teachers who had participated in a pilot project with 'English for all' thought it was neither reasonable nor fair to submit all pupils to learning a foreign language (Tholin and Lindqvist 2009:149). There was a perception that all pupils would not be able to benefit from learning a FL.

Scholars commenting on the educational policies of this period have pointed out that it was marked with an ambivalence between a more democratic perspective and an elitist view of FL teaching and learning, a tension which will prove to be long lasting in the Swedish context. An indication of the elitist view is that SFLs functioned as screening instruments to identify gifted students (Marklund 1985; Tornberg 1997; Cabau-Lampa 2005; Tholin and Lindqvist 2009). The authors of the 1946 School Commissions write that it is among successful students of SFLs that one will find those who "in the future, [...] will be assigned key-positions in the Swedish cultural scene" (1946 School Commission, cited in Cabau-Lampa 2005:100). The study of SFLs and in particular German grammar (characterized as 'the needle's eve' by the National Board of Education) was considered hard and difficult and could thus function as an effective screening instrument. When more than half of the pupils chooses to study German in the cohort of 1953, the National Board of Education finds this "surprising and somewhat alarming" (National Board of Education 1953, cited in Tholin and Lindqvist 2009). In this respect, English was clearly viewed differently than French and German as Tholin (2019) describes it:

When languages other than English were introduced in comprehensive school, this was done on terms that were completely different from those of other subjects. While the expectation was that as many students as possible would succeed in their studies in other subjects, the explicit purpose of language studies was to serve as a screening instrument, and this entailed the expectation that not all students would succeed in their language studies [...]. (Tholin 2019: 319)

In terms of types of educational policy instruments, it can be noted that English was from outset associated with a control instrument, the mandatory status of the subject, despite the fact that a majority of a group of important agents, the teachers, seem to have been against this measure (Tholin & Lindqvist, 2009:149). One can ask why a control measure with respect to English was accepted all the same. Johansson (2004) argues that English enjoyed wide public support already before the 1940s and mentions in this context the Swedish emigrants to the United States some of which had started to return to Sweden in the 1920s. Many Swedish people also corresponded with relatives living in the US. Taken together, there was probably a perception of usefulness of learning English in broader layers of society that was enough for legitimizing the use of a control instrument. SFLs were governed with a combination of control and incentives. SFLs acted as the gateway to upper secondary school. If you pass the needle's eye, you are offered the possibility of further studies and in the end other career opportunities. At the same time, the policy objective was not that all or even many pupils should study an SFL, let alone succeed if they did.

2.2 The 1960s - 1980s - democratization

In 1962, the first curriculum for a nine-year compulsory school came into force. A central aim was to implement uniformity and equity in education. School was seen as a means to achieve greater social equality. English was made mandatory from Year 4 (age 10) to Year 7 (age 13) and remained a tool for democratization during the 1960s (Cabau-Lampa 2005; Tholin and Lindqvist 2009). A second foreign language, German or French, now became an elective subject for students in theoretically oriented streams, i.e. streams where pupils could be expected to continue to upper secondary school. For the first time ever, German and French were regarded as equal language choices and the languages were attributed the same number of teaching hours (Malmberg, 2000). During this period, France became an increasingly important country in Europe (cf. economist Jean Fourastié's label les trente glorieuses, 1945–1975 'the glorious thirty years'). Another reason could be the democratisation effort. French should no longer be reserved for the small elite as had been the case previously. According to Malmberg (2000). 40 % of the pupils studied German and 20 % studied French. The details of these figures are not clear, but they could be taken to mean that around 60 % of all pupils studied a SFL in lower secondary school in the early 1960s.

In the curriculum reform of 1969, a new structure of elective courses was introduced. Pupils in lower secondary school could choose a SFL (German or French), business, technology, and art. The former requirement of having studied a SFL in compulsory school in order to enter upper secondary school was abandoned. This means that SFLs lost their role as screening instruments in compulsory school and consequently the status of SFLs in compulsory school became unclear. Therefore, individual political voices were raised for making SFLs compulsory already during this period (Tholin and Lindqvist 2009).

A more thorough debate on the status of SFLs in compulsory school came ten years later, prior to the introduction of the 1980 curriculum. Two conflicting options were discussed: either SFLs are excluded from compulsory school altogether (and only introduced in upper secondary school) or they are made compulsory (Tholin and Lindqvist 2009). The National Board of Education (1978, cited in Tholin and Lindqvist 2009) favoured making a SFL obligatory, but the language teachers themselves were again not in favour of a mandatory status. A survey initiated by the National Board of Education (National Board of Education 1991) showed that only 12% of the teachers of French and German would like to see their subjects become mandatory in lower secondary school. The main reasons were that not all pupils were believed to be interested in and/or suited for studying a SFL. The solution was that things stayed more or less the same as before. SFLs remained elective subjects, but there was a stronger emphasis on decentralisation than before. Organisers decided on the language offer in schools, but each municipality still had to offer German and French.

This period saw a change in the educational policies with respect to SFLs. When their role as screening instruments was abandoned, it seemed to have resulted in an uncertainty about their status in compulsory school. Views differed on the importance and feasibility of teaching SFLs in lower secondary school. The result was a division between those who wished to exclude SFLs from compulsory

school altogether and those who wanted to introduce a control measure in order to maintain them.

2.3 The curriculum of 1994 – preparing for an entrance into the EU

In the inquiries preceding the introduction of the new curriculum in 1994, experts were again arguing that a SFL should become obligatory (SOU 1992: 94). At the time, Sweden was preparing for a possible entrance into the EU and strengthening SFLs was seen as priority. The EU discourse on multilingualism has changed several times (Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2011) since the mid-1990s, but early on the idea of democratic multilingualism - multilingualism for all - was present in the discourse:

It is no longer possible to reserve proficiency in foreign languages for an elite or for those who acquire it on account of their geographical mobility ... it is becoming necessary for everyone, irrespective of training and education routes chosen, to be able to acquire and keep up their ability to communicate in at least two Community languages in addition to their mother tongue. (European Commission 1995: 47)

The so called 'mother tongue + 2' strategy was referred to in the inquiry preceding the introduction of the 1994 curriculum and the new curriculum meant that SFLs were strengthened in different ways. There was a 25 % increase in teaching hours (a total of 320 hours over 3 or 4 years). A similar increase was not made in other subjects. Spanish was introduced as a third SFL alongside German and French. Spanish had become increasingly popular in upper secondary school, possibly as a consequence of vacation habits and a fairly large group of heritage speakers in the country (Riis & Francia, 2013). As a consequence, it was felt that pupils in lower secondary school should also have the possibility of studying Spanish, a clear case of participants (pupils, teachers) affecting the access policy at the national level (cf. Spolsky, 2004). Organisers at the municipality level were now obliged to offer two out the three languages German, French and Spanish. Schools could decide whether SFL teaching should start in Year 6 (12 years) or Year 7 (13 years).

In sum, several changes with respect to SFLs took place when the 1994 curriculum was introduced, but with respect to the most burning issue, the mandatory status, there was again no change. A SFL did not become obligatory. Instead, an obligatory language choice was introduced. Pupils could choose a SFL (French, German or Spanish) or an alternative to SFLs, including remedial Swedish or English (or a disputed combination of the two labelled SV/EN, see Tholin & Lindqvist, 2009), Swedish as Second Language or Swedish Sign Language. The alternatives to SFL were primarily thought for pupils who did not have Swedish as a first language.

Cabau-Lampa (2005) argues that there was not enough public support in order to use the stick and make SFLs obligatory in 1994. Instead, the Government used another educational policy instrument. In the Government bill (prop. 1992/ 93:220) the persuasions or sermons in favour of choosing to study a SFL are abundant and apparent:

Increasing international cooperation generally increases the requirements for broader and deeper language skills. Good language skills are thus increasingly needed in working life and higher education [...]. English has the obvious position of a mandatory first foreign language, [...] At the same time, as we noted at the outset, it is natural that the strong concentration on English is now supplemented with an increased interest in the other major European languages. [...] The Government further believes that all pupils should be required to make a language choice. For most people, this should focus on the opportunity to study a second foreign language. (Government bill 1992/93:220: 69)

The Government conjectured that the persuasions would work and that choosing a SFL would be the "default" for the vast majority of pupils. This educational policy has later been qualified as a "soft obligation" (Tholin and Lindqvist 2009), a policy measure somewhere in between sermons and sticks. According to the Government, very few pupils would choose an alternative to a SFL, but this did not happen.

In the beginning of the 2000s, several reports and inquiries were concerned that dropout rates in compulsory school were still high and (too) few pupils continued with SFLs in upper secondary school (e.g. National Agency for Education 2000). Pupils were choosing an alternative to a SFL since studying a SFL was perceived as too hard or difficult. A number of commentators identified this trend as a "language crisis" at all educational levels, including universities (see Börjesson & Bertilsson, 2010 and Krigh, 2019 for examples). At the time, about 80 % of all pupils started to study a SFL in Year 6 (age 12) or Year 7 (age 13), but since the subject had not been made mandatory in 1994 it was possible to opt out, which about 25 % did before the end of compulsory school (Tholin and Lindqvist 2009). This meant that around 65 % of all pupils had a SFL in their diploma when finishing compulsory school (Börjesson & Bertilsson, 2010). A similar trend was apparent in upper secondary school where pupils chose less difficult and challenging subjects than SFLs. Again, voices were raised to make SFLs obligatory in lower secondary school.

The Government was concerned with the development (prop. 2005/06:2: 43), but rather than revising the elective status of SFLs in the curriculum, the government chose another path and yet another type of policy instrument.

In 2007 (revised on several occasions during 2010-2015) Grade Point Average Enhancement Credits (GPAEC) (meritpoäng in Swedish) for SFLs were introduced as a new incentive measure to raise the interest in studying SFLs and to increase the completion rate among pupils. Initially, this measure only targeted the transition between upper secondary school and university. The idea was to encourage pupils to continue studying a SFL in upper secondary school and to complete higher levels. Together with English and Mathematics, completed higher levels mean that pupils' GPA scores can be increased when applying to university. Foreign languages (English and SFLs) and Mathematics were chosen because they were considered difficult subjects by pupils, but also important to increase Sweden's competitiveness (Government bill 2004/05:162). Since pupils can only study higher levels of a SFL (French, German or Spanish) in upper secondary school if they have already studied the same SFL already in compulsory school, it was believed that this measure would have a positive effect on SFLs also in lower secondary school.

In 2014, the system was expanded with a similar measure targeting the transition between lower secondary school and upper secondary school. The logic was the same: if pupils complete their studies of SFLs in lower secondary school, the GPA scores are increased when applying to upper secondary school.

We can observe from this period that when the sermons on choosing to a study a SFL in compulsory school were not considered enough, the Government introduced carrots for those who started and continued to study a SFL. The incentive in the policy is that studying a SFL will pay off if pupils decide to apply for a higher educational level. Following a similar kind of logic as the policy in the 1940s, the target population of the GPAEC policy are the pupils who can be expected to continue to upper secondary or post-secondary education. I will come back to this similarity in the discussion, but first I will review what is known about the consequences of the GPAEC policy in the next section.1

¹ For the sake of completeness in this overview of curricula for compulsory school, the current curriculum which came into force in 2011 should also be included. Together with new course plans for SFLs, there are several changes compared to the 1994 curriculum, especially an attempt to align competence standards to the CEFR, but regarding the focus of the present paper, access policies of SFLs, the 2011 curriculum did not imply any changes.

3 The consequences of the GPAEC system and the current situation for SFLs

A crucial question is to understand if the GPAEC incentive measure works. Does it have the intended effect of raising the proportion of pupils who study a SFL? To date there has not been any comprehensive evaluation of the GPAEC measure, but the effects of this measure have been commented on in different reports and papers.

The European Commission (2014) published a country-comparative report as a follow-up to the First European Study on Language Competencies study. For Sweden, the report finds that the introduction of GPAEC has increased the completion rate and the number of pupils studying SFLs in the country, but there is no data in the report to support the claim. The National Agency for Education (2018) discusses the effects of the GPAEC in upper secondary school and finds that more pupils complete higher levels of SFLs after the introduction of the GPAEC system than before. Since it is not possible to complete higher levels of SFLs in upper secondary school if you have not started studying the SFL already in lower secondary school, the National Agency for Education finds that the introduction of the GPAECs for SFLs should also have had a positive effect on the proportion of pupils studying a SFL in lower secondary school.

A more thorough analysis of the trends in the study of SFLs before and after the introduction of the GPAEC system was carried out in (Granfeldt et al. 2020). This study looked at the proportion of pupils studying a SFL in the last year of lower secondary school (Year 9) between 2000 and 2018 and compared the period before and after the introduction of GPAECs. The results showed that on a national level around 64% of the pupils studied a SFL in Year 9 in 2007, the year before the introduction of the GPAEC. This figure had raised to 72% in 2018, an all-time high for the 21st century. It would seem, then, that the GPAEC had a positive effect in the way it was intended. However, Granfeldt et al. (2020) show that the increase is not equally distributed across different demographic municipalities. In fact, in Year 2000, the proportion of pupils studying a SFL in Year 9 did not differ in large cities, medium-sized towns and smaller towns/rural municipalities. In all three demographic groups around 62% studied a SFL. In 2018, 76% of the pupils in large cities studied a SFL and 66% in medium-sized towns. In smaller towns and rural municipalities, there was no increase at all between 2000 and 2018. There are two important observations in this data. First, it means that the increase at the national level after the introduction of the GPAEC system is mainly an increase in large cities and to some extent in medium-sized towns. Second, it means that what was once a relatively homogenous situation in the sense that there was no or very little difference between urban and rural areas with respect to the study of SFLs has no become much more differentiated.

The question is what might have caused this differentiation. While the answer is not straightforward with the type of data we have at hand, it would seem plausible that the GPAECs has played a role in this development. This becomes even more apparent when statistics concerning the transition to post-secondary education are considered. Recall that the GPAECs for higher levels of SFL courses increase the possibilities of entering university. The proportion of young people who continue studying at university is generally higher in large cities and municipalities near large cities than elsewhere (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2016). In other words, it is in precisely those demographic regions where the expectancy to go to university is the highest, that the study of SFLs in Year 9 has increased the most.

However, there are reasons to believe that the demographics *per se* is not the most important part of the puzzle. Krigh (2019) investigates the study of SFLs from an educational sociology perspective. Working in a Bourdieuian framework and drawing on the notion of capital, Krigh asked the question of which pupils with respect to gender, social and national background and grade point average that chose to invest in the study of modern languages (Krigh 2019: 221). Most pupils start studying a SFL in Year 6 or Year 7, but boys more than girls abandon the subject before the end of lower secondary school (cf. also Tholin and Lindqvist 2009). Native-born pupils more than foreign-born invest in a SFL. Pupils coming from lower middle class and working class abandon their SFL most. Among working class boys, only one in two studied a SFL in Year 9 in Krigh's data. The gender difference was also the largest among the working class families. Pupils coming from families with a high cultural capital were the ones who received the highest grades. In conclusion, Krigh finds that pupils coming from resource strong families are the ones who are the most likely to persist with their studies of a SFL until the end of lower secondary school. Krigh has also noted the all-time high proportions of pupils who currently study a SFL in lower secondary school and points to an other interpretation of the "language crisis" for SFLs:

Therefore, there are reasons to conclude that the language crisis, as presented in public debate, does not exist. On the contrary, more pupils than ever study modern languages in compulsory school. On the other hand, there is reason to discuss a potential inequality crisis in relation to which groups of pupils participate in the elective educational pathway that studies in modern language offer within the framework of a cohesive compulsory school an elective pathway which disadvantages the daughters and in particular the sons of the working class because it favours upper and middle class children, in particular their daughters. (Krigh 2019: 240, my emphasis)

The GPAEC educational policy instrument seems to have fitted very well with the groups of pupils who traditionally choose to study a SFL in school. The carrots introduced by the Government probably corresponded to the needs, the interests and the intended educational investments of the upper and middle-class children and their families. The consequences are all-time high levels of participation in SFL classes in lower secondary school, but at the same time an increasing social differentiation between those of who study more than one foreign language in Sweden. The inequalities have grown and the EU idea of multilingualism for all (beyond English) is increasingly more distant.

Another clear trend of inequalities in the Swedish SFL landscape during the last 20 years concerns the diversity of the SFL offer across the country. Again, it can be argued to be a consequence of the educational policies in the domain. Sweden is among the countries that have experienced a 'Spanish boom', i.e. a considerable increase in the interest in studying Spanish. Since Spanish was introduced as an option in lower secondary school in 1994, the language has seen a dramatic increase in the proportion of pupils choosing it. The increase took off in the beginning of 2000 and has led to a situation where, today, more pupils choose Spanish than French and German together (Francia and Riis 2013, 2016; Granfeldt et al. 2020). Interestingly, Spanish was the most frequently studied SFL in lower secondary school in all social groups according to Krigh (2019: 224). While Spanish has seen a sharp increase, German saw an initial sharp decrease in the beginning of the 2000s and lost its position as the most studied SFL in 2006. After 2008, the proportion of pupils choosing German has been rather stable just below 20 %. French saw a smaller decrease in the beginning of century, but has stayed relatively stable around 15–17 %. Importantly, the SFLs are not chosen to the same extent across the country. Granfeldt et al. (2020) found that while Spanish is the most studied SFL everywhere, French is mostly studied in large cities. German on the other hand is comparatively more studied in small municipalities and rural areas. In small municipalities with few students, French has traditionally had its weakest support.

In the current School ordinance (Ministry of Education 2011), organisers are required to offer two out three of the languages French, German and Spanish and they should strive to offer more. In other words there is a stick saying that an offer of two SFLs is a minimum and sermons saying that organisers should offer three SFLs or even more. A clear majority of schools still offer all three languages (Granfeldt et al. 2019), but there is an increasing number of municipalities that do not register any pupils in one of the languages. This is particularly the case with French, which has seen a quite dramatic increase in municipalities where no pupils study the language, in many cases because of a reduction of the SFL offer from three to two languages (Granfeldt et al. 2020). Table 1 below shows that in 2007, the year before the introduction of GPAEC, there were 9 municipalities (out of 290) or 3% without registered pupils in French in lower secondary school. 12 years later the same figure is 46 or 16%. Municipalities representing smaller towns in rural areas are overrepresented in this category. Table 1 also shows the continuous spread of Spanish. In 2007, 40 municipalities had no pupils in Spanish, a figure which is down to 4 in 2019. German has only seen a small increase in these statistics, which might be because comparatively more pupils choose this SFL in smaller towns and rural areas.

Table 1: Number of municipalities (out of 290) without registered pupils in French, German or Spanish (2007 vs 2019)

	Large cities and municipalities near large cities		Medium-sized towns		Smaller towns/ rural areas			Total
	2007	2019	2007	2019	2007	2019	2007	2019
French	0	0	2	17	7	29	9	46
German	1	0	0	4	0	6	1	10
Spanish	2	0	15	2	23	2	40	4

A current trend is that some organisers reduce the offer of SFLs to Spanish and German. This means that it is increasingly often the case that the offer of SFLs that pupils have depends on where you live in Sweden. If you grow up in a small rural municipality, there is a high risk that you cannot study French in school. Stakeholders and the public have recently reacted to this progressive trend of inequalities in the media (see Krigh 2019: 11 for a discussion). In other words, the organisers at the municipality level are complying with the stick, but less and less with the sermons coming from the Government.

4 Discussion and conclusion

This paper is concerned with educational policies regarding SFLs in Sweden with a particular focus on access policy, i.e. the question of who should study a SFL when and for how long. The historical overview shows that both policy objectives and instruments used to reach the objectives have changed since the 1940s. This is not surprising. Societies have gone through dramatic changes in all social domains during this period and Sweden is obviously no exception. It is perhaps more surprising to find that there are resemblances between educational policies for SFLs from 80 years ago and the ones currently in vigour. The relationship between English and SFLs like French, German and Spanish has remained the same over the whole period. On the one hand, English has from the outset been governed with (increasing) control measures. Successively, English has been introduced at an even earlier age and it has been mandatory for all to study the language, despite initial doubts among an important group of agents, the teachers, about the feasibility of 'English for all'. On the other hand, the elective status of SFLs like French, German and later Spanish has been fundamental in educational policies over the whole period, despite political and expert voices raised since the 1960s to make the subject mandatory in compulsory school. The type of policy instruments with respect to SFLs has varied, but the target population has essentially remained the same. In the earliest period, SFLs were officially regarded as a screening instrument, a way of identifying gifted pupils who could continue their education at higher levels. In the beginning of the 1960s, SFLs were part of the gateway to upper secondary school. When this role is lost in the democratization process of the late 1960s, the result is a confusion regarding the status of SFLs and a dichotomous debate between extreme positions – exclude or make mandatory – emerges. With the entrance into EU the democratization argument – multilingualism for all – is reinforced through the 'mother tongue + 2' language policy, but the Government is not prepared to choose any sticks at this point, possibly because neither the SFL teachers nor the public are convinced. Instead, the Government chooses persuasion or sermons to stress the importance of SFLs as Sweden becomes a member of EU.

By choosing persuasion and not control as their policy instrument, the Government should be aware and should accept that not all pupils will study a SFL, but the Government still becomes concerned when there is a perception among stakeholders that too few pupils actually do so. This was the case in the beginning of the 2000s and the reason why the Government chose to introduce yet another type of policy instrument: a carrot in the shape of GPAECs for SFLs. The idea behind incentive measures is that people are "utility maxi-misers" (Salazar-Morales 2018). They will analyse the incentives and see how they best can profit from them. The GPAEC system first targeted the transition from upper secondary school to university and then the transition between lower and upper secondary school. Available analyses seem to indicate that there was a good match between this measure and social groups where there was already an intention to invest in further education. The results have been all-time high levels of pupils studying a SFL at the end of compulsory school, but also an increasing social differentiation between pupils from upper and middle-class who possibly more than ever study a SFL and those from working class families who do not intend to continue to university to the same extent.

The question is how Sweden ended up with these national ping-pong policies with respect to SFLs and why sermons and carrots, but much less sticks have been favoured over the years. In the remaining section of this paper, I will discuss two interrelated factors: the status and the proficiency in English and the lack of a foreign language policy in Sweden for languages other than English.

The early decisions to make English the first foreign language and mandatory were important. Cabau-Lampa (2005, 2007) and Tholin (2019) both argue that English was regarded differently from SFLs from the start. The argument for English was based on a needed utilitarianism, because of the internationalization efforts after WW2. English was never meant to play the role of screening instrument which was the case for SFLs and in particular German. The National Board of Education was less worried that some pupils would not be suitable for learning English, despite what the teachers felt (Tholin and Lindqvist 2009). Moreover, there was probably already in the 1940s a perception among broader layers of society that English was useful (Johansson, 2004). A second key moment is in 1994 when there was again the possibility of making SFLs obligatory, but by that time the view of 'English is enough' is probably well instituted in the society and there was not enough support in the public to introduce any control measures for SFLs (Cabau-Lampa, 2005). Since then, several reports seem to have supported the view that language proficiency in English is generally high (e.g. European Commission 2011) and the language enjoys a very strong support among the public (European Commission, 2012). In conclusion, the early and strong educational focus on English as the first foreign language together with the strong support and high proficiency in the language have made any sticks impossible with respect to other foreign languages. Salazar-Morales (2018) points out that control measures need public legitimacy in order to succeed. This has never been the case for SFLs.

The second factor is the lack of a clear foreign language policy in Sweden with respect to other foreign languages than English. There has never been a needs analysis with respect to foreign languages or foreign language competences in Sweden as in other countries (e.g. the Netherlands, van Els 1994, 2005) even though several stakeholders and experts have pointed out this lack (e.g. Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions 2015). This means that there is no available knowledge base on which an educational policy could be constructed. In Sweden, there is no research-based knowledge about the economic, educational or cultural benefits of investing in SFLs for different sectors of society or for the individual even though some published reports indicate that Swedish competitiveness is suffering due to a lack of foreign language proficiency in small and medium-sized companies (Rosén, 2017). There is a need for more research in this domain.

Another consequence of a lacking foreign language policy is that it is very difficult to evaluate whether a current policy and the accompanying instruments are successful or not since the goals are not specified. This became apparent in

the beginning of the 2000s when the number of pupils studying and completing a SFL decreased. Even though the elective status of the subject and the persuasion tool that accompanied it would predict that all pupils will not choose a SFL, the Government became worried and they chose to introduce the incentive measure of GPAECs, possibly as a reaction to the emerging debate on a 'language crisis' at the time. What a satisfactory proportion of pupils studying a SFL in the country is has never been clearly layed out. Currently, there is an all-time high proportion of pupils studying a SFL at the end of lower secondary school, but the discourse on a 'language crisis' continues. However, it is highly probable that the GPAEC carrots have been effective, but they were mainly utilised by the same population that has always been the target of Swedish SFL education policies, pupils from upper and middle-class families.

In conclusion and looking at the period from 1946 of educational policies and instruments in the domain of SFLs, there is in fact a certain consistency. Sermons have not been perceived to be enough, carrots tend to lead to inequalities and sticks have always been avoided.

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