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Outcomes of Student Learning and the Learning Evaluation Approach in Sweden
-Reconsideration of Evaluation Approach from the Perspective of a Student Survey-

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Introduction

Circumstances surrounding Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have been transformed by the progress of globalization and the rapid shift in social context. The international rivalry of higher education markets and the progress of globalization of labour markets deliver internationally compatible degrees and curricula to HEIs. Under these circumstances, each nation must quickly adjust the formation of frameworks for learning outcomes to demonstrate what students should know and be able to do through higher education. Each formation phase and background differs, depending on individual nations' needs. Sweden constructed a high grade quality assurance framework for setting and measuring learning outcomes in 2011. The current quality assurance program consists of program evaluation and accreditation, and the program evaluation focuses on learning outcomes. Program evaluations are now operating at HEIs across the nation under the new quality assurance program. Hence, there are scarce data and materials with which to examine the current status of program evaluations focusing on learning outcomes of students.

The author already discussed quality assurance, focusing on learning outcomes of student in 2011. That study discussed the issue of the internal efficiency of Higher Education after providing a detailed description about the background behind the introduction of quality assurance. This paper details the definition of learning outcomes, and then examines the characteristics of its perspective and approach in Sweden. It also focuses attention on how HEIs provide educational environments and upgrade students' knowledge and skills based on the definition of learning outcomes in reference to the result of a student survey (2007). The paper is structured as follows:

In the first part of this paper, I will determine the meaning of learning outcomes based on the competence theory, AHELO (the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes), Key Competency and Graduate Attributes. I will then define learning outcomes in Sweden and discuss how quality assurance and learning outcomes are formulated. Based on the definition of learning outcomes, this definition will reveal how Sweden upgrades its human resources through higher education. Moreover, this paper will examine the actual condition of students' skills and learning goals in reference to the result of a student survey. The final part of this paper concludes with an evaluation of the current situation of students' learning and the challenge of an evaluation approach focusing on learning outcomes.

1. The Definition of Learning Outcomes

What are the expected learning outcomes at HEIs? As presented above, the concept of learning outcomes and the subsequent evaluation approach can vary due to the lack of a specific definition of those terms (Yoshihara 2007, Kawashima 2008). As for the concept of international learning outcomes, for example, there are the AHELO by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Key Competency by OECD's Definition and Selection of Competencies Project (DeSeCo) Project, and Graduate Attributes, which have been proposed in Japan.

The AHELO was developed as tools used to measure students' learning outcomes in 2009. It aims to measure

students' abilities and skills at the time of graduation from HEIs and evaluate their performances. The exam measures students' generic skills and outcomes in the field of engineering and economics. A questionnaire survey is also conducted to acquire information about students and the education environment at each HEI. Generic skills are composed of four elements; theoretical thinking, analytical thinking, problem resolution and written communication skills (ability to write appropriate and effective sentences on reports, memos and documents).

The DeSeCo Project is designed to implement an international survey concerning the competencies of young adults, setting the concept of key competency. Key competency consists of three areas;

1. The interactive use of tools (language or technologies),

2. Interaction within heterogeneous groups,

3. Autonomous action

Using tools interactively means the ability to take advantage of physical tools like those that involve information technologies and IT, and socio cultural tools like languages in effective interaction with others. Interacting in heterogeneous groups means skills in meeting and engaging with various people from diverse backgrounds around the world. Acting autonomously means skills that individuals develop in their own lives concerning a sense of responsibility in viewing themselves within a wide social context. The core of this concept is to cultivate perspectives that build on relationships with society, enhance their sustained development and autonomously consider the connection between society and the individual.

In Japan, the Central Education Committee developed a definition of graduate attributes. This committee expects to formulate a baccalaureate degree program and HEIs will formulate the required knowledge, skills and qualification on graduating needed to complete that program. Graduate attributes are structured as follows;

1. Knowledge and understanding (to understand basic knowledge in one's major field of study, and to understand knowledge about multiculturalism),

2. Generic skills (to acquire skills in intellectual activity, work life and social life, such as communication skills, quantitative skills, logical thinking etc.),

3. Attitude and orientation (to have a sense of self-managing, teamwork, social responsibility as a citizen),

4. Comprehensive learning experience and creative thinking (to be able to take the initiative when faced with a new challenge). This requires having a broad understanding of academic knowledge in relation to society and broad skills and attitudes that allow for autonomous action in various social situations concerning individuals.

Similarities can be found in international learning outcomes; understanding generic and specific knowledge in the individual's own field of study, the ability to utilize theoretical thinking and problem solving, and the ability to communicate and build relationship with others.

2. The Definition of Learning Outcomes in Sweden

The Higher Education Act demonstrates the required knowledge and skills in which students should;

1. Make independent and critical assessments,

2. Identify, formulate and solve problems autonomously,

3. Deal with changes in a working environment,

4. Gather information at a scholarly level,

5. Stay abreast of developments in education and knowledge, and

6. Communicate their knowledge to others.

The Higher Education Ordinance describes more detailed knowledge and skills required for each degree program, categorizing these three areas; knowledge and understanding, competence and skills, and judgment and approach. Each program sets goal based on the learning outcomes described in the ordinance. For instance, the learning outcomes for a Bachelor of Arts and Engineering are as follows:

Table 1. Learning Outcomes for Bachelor of Arts

Knowledge and Understanding	- demonstrate knowledge and understanding in the main field of study, including knowledge of the disciplinary foundation of the field - understanding of applicable methodologies in the field - specialized study in some aspect of the field as well as awareness of current research issues
Competence and Skill	- demonstrate the ability to search for, gather, evaluate and critically interpret relevant information for a formulated problem and also critically discuss different phenomena, issues and situations - demonstrate the ability to identify, formulate and solve problems autonomously and to complete tasks within predetermined time frames - demonstrate the ability to present and discuss information, problems and solutions in speech, writing, and through dialogue with different audiences - demonstrate the skills required to work autonomously in the main field of study

Judgment and Approach	- demonstrate the ability to make assessments in the main field of study; informed by relevant disciplinary, social and ethical issues - demonstrate insight into the role of knowledge in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used - demonstrate the ability to identify the need for further knowledge and learning

Source: Högskoleförordningen (1993:100)

Table 2. Learning Outcomes for Bachelor of Engineering

Knowledge and Understanding	- demonstrate knowledge of the disciplinary foundation of the engineering field chosen and proven experience in this field as well as awareness of current research and development work - demonstrate broad knowledge in the engineering field and relevant knowledge of mathematics and the natural sciences
Competence and Skill	- demonstrate the ability to identify, formulate and deal with issues autonomously, and creatively and to analyse technological solutions - demonstrate the ability to plan and using appropriate methods, undertaking tasks within predetermined parameters - demonstrate the ability to use knowledge critically and to systematically model, stimulate, predict and evaluate a series of events on the basis of relevant information - demonstrate the ability to design and manage products, processes and systems while taking into account the circumstances and needs of individuals and the targets for economically, socially and ecologically sustainable developments set by the community - demonstrate the capacity for teamwork and collaboration with various constellations - demonstrate the ability to present and discuss information, problems and solutions in speech, writing, and dialogue with different audiences
Judgment and Approach	- demonstrate the ability to make assessments in the main field of study, informed by relevant disciplinary, social and ethical issues - demonstrate insight into the possibilities and limitations of technology, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used in social and economic settings - demonstrate the ability to identify the need for further knowledge and undertake on-going development of his or her skills

Source: Högskoleförordningen (1993:100)

Learning outcomes imply not only understanding knowledge about one's academic field but also about social and

ethical connections with the academic field, which means that students are required to develop a consciousness in taking advantage of knowledge and skills in social living situations. Learning outcomes should take on social and ethical meanings. The ethical perspective involves gender segregation, social and ethnic discrimination, and a sense of democracy. Since this is emphasized in schools through a compulsory education, ethical perspectives are the core concepts of education systems from basic education to higher education in Sweden.

The next section describes the framework and system of quality assurance, focusing on learning outcomes and how learning outcomes are evaluated.

3. Learning Outcomes and Quality Assurance

Higher education reform 1993 led HEIs to promote improvements in the quality of higher education. HEIs were allowed to work autonomously and to set their own criterion for selecting students. In 2007, Sweden joined the Bologna Process, and standardized the education system: three years for a bachelor degree, two years for a master's degree and three years for a doctoral degree. Relevant government ministries and agencies were reorganized to reduce tasks for quality assurance and internationalization. Högskoleverket (the Agency for Higher Education), Internationella Programkontoret (International Program Office), and VHS (Verketförhögskoleservice, The Agency for Higher Education Services[1]) were consolidated, and the new two agencies, Universitetskanslersämbetet (the Swedish Higher Education Authority) and Univiersitets och högskolerådet (the Swedish Council for Higher Education) were established in January, 2013. The Swedish Higher Education Authority took over the function of quality assurance.

Former quality assurance was based on five points, which were:

1. Accreditation,

2. Thematic studies,

3. Evaluation of education,

4. Evaluation of research and studies, and

5. An award of excellence in an educational environment.

It was supposed to be implemented from 2009 to 2012. However, the program was derailed due to lack of funding and human resources and the enormity of tasks assigned to HEIs and evaluation groups[2]. The current quality assurance of 2011-2014 was then enacted, focusing on learning outcomes that measure worldwide social impacts on quality improvement. It is simpler than the former one, and consists of two elements: program evaluation and accreditation. Learning outcomes are assessed based on students' achievements. Assessors evaluate a student's thesis as an indication of his or her achievement within a particular course. In comparison with the former one, the newer quality assurance process is not process oriented (Nilsson and Wahlén, 2000), having shifted to outcome oriented (Högskoleverket, 2011d).

Based on the results of the evaluations, including learning outcomes, Universitetskanslersämbetet rates

programs at higher education institutions on a three-point scale: Very High Quality, High Quality, and Low Quality. Evaluation occurs at three levels, which begins in the HEIs, followed by external assessors, and finally Universitetskanslersämbetet. HEIs conduct a self-evaluation assessment based on the general guidelines for self-evaluation in Universitetskanslersämbetet's Quality Evaluation System. External Assessors conduct a site visit and evaluate students' theses as learning outcomes in reports submitted by HEIs. This evaluation focuses on students achieving learning outcomes as mandated by the Higher Education Ordinance and that the education program is formulated based on the demand within the labour markets. The results of this evaluation will be addressed on the website of Universitetskanslersämbetet. For example, the program for a B.A. in business administration at Uppsala University was evaluated as "Low Quality". Two out of six elements received low marks for "knowledge and understanding about the main field of study" and "deep methodological knowledge". The element "knowledge and understanding about the main field of study" stated only that a student's achievement (thesis) for evaluation was a lack of knowledge about understanding the main field of study, and insight concerning current research and studies".

A positive evaluation, Very High Quality, would earn the HEIs a grant. If the evaluation resulted in a Lack of Quality designation, the institution would be required to undergo a second monitoring. If the evaluation report is still not approved, however, the right to award degrees would be stripped from the institution. Funding allocation based on the results of evaluations will begin in 2013. Approximately 2% of the total amount will be allocated as additional fimding based on evaluation.[3]

The purpose of learning outcomes is not to evaluate students' abilities but whether they accomplished the goals set for the course. HEIs, however, complain that this approach focuses on the thesis. This is because the result of the evaluation will be different depending on the particular thesis[4], which might be difficult to evaluate if students are only able to cultivate their ethical perspective by only developing an evaluation.[5]

Yamada (2012) examined the difference of evaluation approaches based on previous research from Banta or Shavelson, and concluded there are two different approaches: direct evaluation measuring learning outcomes from exams, reports, or a thesis, and indirect evaluation measuring education process and students' satisfaction level from students' or graduates' surveys. According to her, program evaluation based on students' theses as learning outcome is considered a direct evaluation approach. Yamada pointed that direct evaluation is not enough to comprehend how students have internalized their education, what kind of experience, values and thought they encounter and how much professors were involved in their education even though "it would be easy, when evaluating learning achievement as an outcome of higher education, to get the impression that outcome is properly measured" (p. 157). She then inferred that "it becomes possible to measure detailed achievement of students' progress in higher education by combining both direct and indirect evaluation" (p. 157).

The next section examines what kind of experiments, values and thoughts students encounter, and how professors are involved in their education depending on the result of a student survey of 2007.

4. Students' Learning Outcomes from the Result of a Student Survey of 2007

In 2002, the first national students' survey, called Studentspegeln (Students' Mirror) was implemented. It aims to figure out students' learning situations and processes, and enhance the quality of higher education based on the viewpoint of students. The questions focused on students' experience, development and education as a good citizen. The national survey for doctoral students was implemented in 2003, for master students in 2006, and then again for

bachelor students for 2007. The national students' survey of 2007 was the most current one. This section will examine how and what students achieve in their learning outcomes based on the report of Studentspegeln 2007. It should be noted that current students do not experience the same learning situations as those that led to the results of 2007. This, however, is an informative result in considering students' attitudes about learning and the educational environment at HEIs based on a national survey.

Following is the overview of the survey. The questionnaires were sent to 11,119 students who attended classes at least two semesters; the collection rate was 57%. The questionnaire was composed of six elements:

1. Education and values,

2. Analytical thinking,

3. Collaboration between students,

4. Communication skills,

5. Reading and writing skills, and

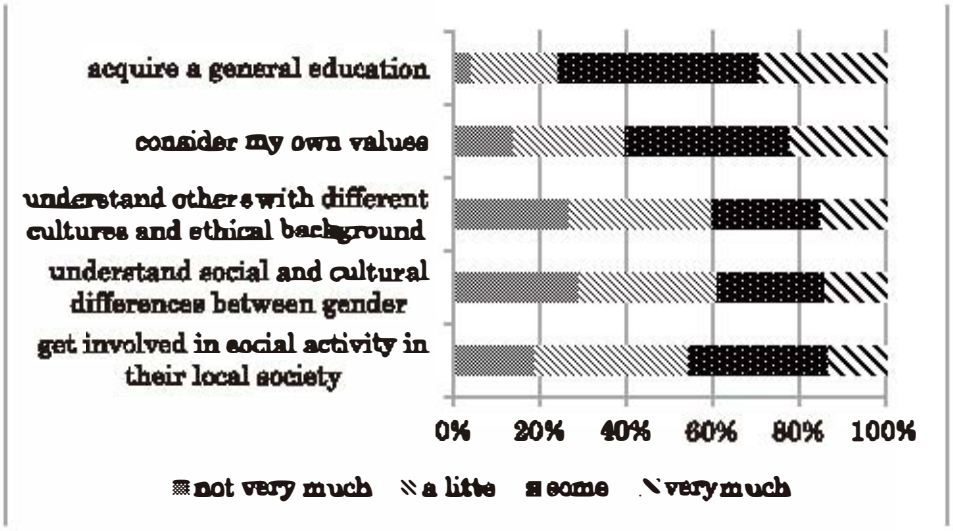
6. Teacher involvement.

4.1 Education and Values

This section is to discover if students acquire a general education, consider their own values, understand gender, cultural and ethical differences, and get involved in social activity in their local society. Sixty per cent of students evaluated themselves as having acquired a general education.

Some students, on the other hand, gave themselves low marks for understanding social and cultural differences between gender, cultural ethical differences and involvement in local society. These concepts are integrated in basic schools as compulsory education, so they have been historically emphasized. Against the backdrop of this educational background, 60% of students understood "a little" or "not much" of these values. The results only make sense if these values are not incorporated into classes, or if students gave low marks for these items even though they are included in classes. Either way, the result indicates the importance of involving students in more of these values in spite of the fact it has been emphasized through compulsory education in basic schools to higher education. Education practice, also, should be designed in a way that not only transfers knowledge and understanding, but also direct experience concerning these values.

Figure 1. Education and Values



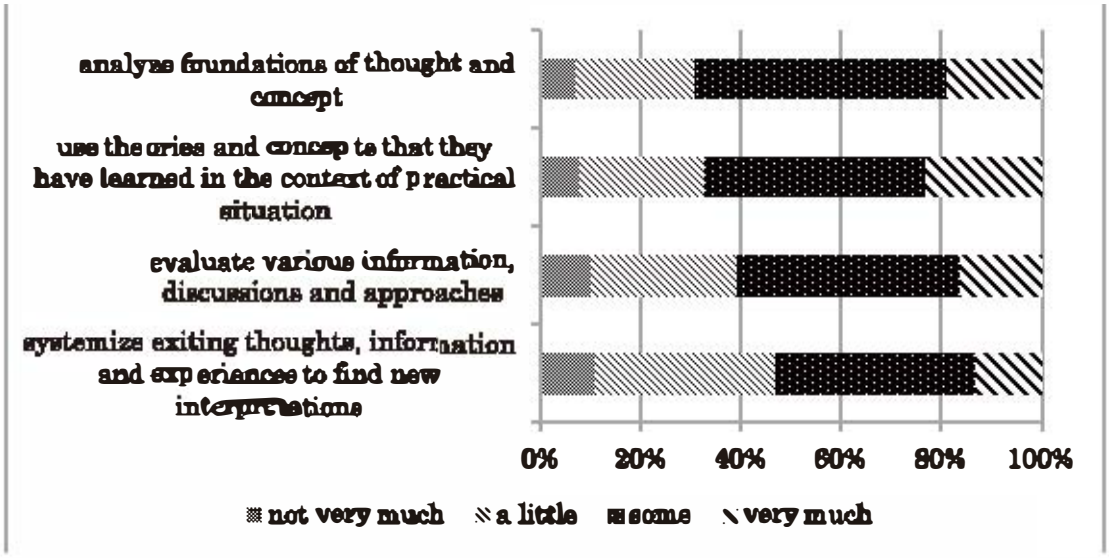
Source: Hiroshima Univ. (2007) Report 2007-30 R, Student Survey 2007.

4.2 Analytical Thinking

Students gave high marks for analytical thinking, with over half evaluating themselves as having acquired this ability. This involves a student's ability to analyse foundations of thought and concept; use theories and concepts that they have learned in the context of practical situations; evaluate various information, discussions and approaches, and systemize existing thoughts, information and experience in order to discover new interpretations.

The item, "use theories and concepts that they have learned in the context of practical situations" is used to discover if students are capable of analysing various concepts and thoughts in actual life; approximately 70% answered that they were able to make use of these theories in practical day-to-day situations. It is because analytical thinking has been emphasized in basic schools, that students have learned to acquire this skill in a step-by-step approach. This educational background resulted in students acquiring a high level of understanding and analytical thinking.

Figure 2. Analytical Thinking



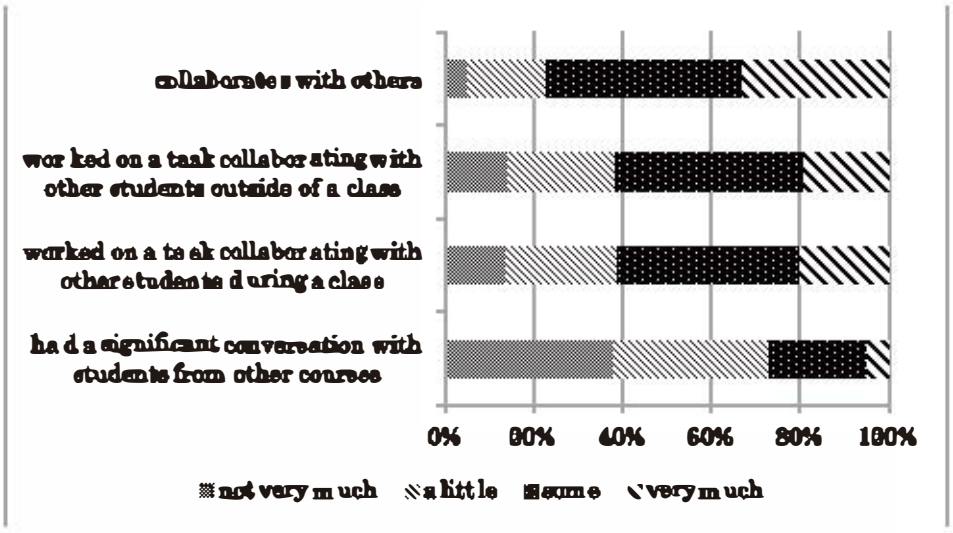
Source: Högskoleverket. (2007) Rapport 2007:30 R, Studentspegeln 2007.

4.2 Collaboration between Students

This item aims to discover if students have had significant conversations with other students, have worked tasks in collaborations with other students during the class, have worked on tasks collaborating with other students outside of classes, and have collaborated, in general, with others. Group discussions are regarded as one of the most important education environments, with students being required to participate in classes. It is also essential for students to make presentations and write reports while working with others. A broader education outcome is expected by working with others and subsequently discovering new ideas and ways of doing things in a collaborative environment, plus this approach is considered good preparation for a future occupational career (Högskoleverket, 2007). This aspect of education is also incorporated into a student's education starting at the level of basic schools.

Eighty per cent responded on the student survey that they collaborated with others, indicating that students cultivate cooperativeness by doing reports and presentations with other students. However, at that time, Högskoleverket noted that results for that survey question were worse than those from the former one (Högskoleverket, 2007). For example, 45 % of students measured as having had a significant conversation with other students in 2002; while only 27% answered they had in the in 2007 survey. This would appear to have been the result of a reduction in curricula in many courses (Högskoleverket, 2007).

Figure 3. Collaboration between Students



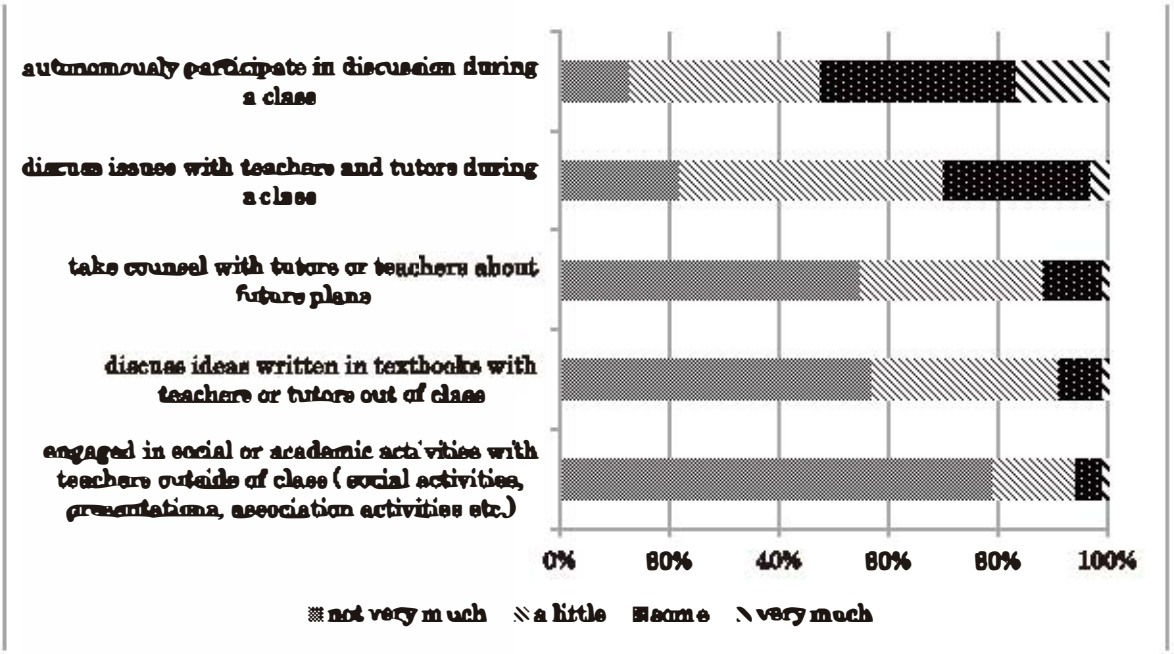
Source: Högskoleverket (2007) Rapport 2007:30 R, Studera i Sverige 2007.

4.4 Communication Skills

Interacting in conversation with teachers or tutors is also important in education. Such conversations are a means of more than the everyday communication that occurs in class, but includes enhanced communication based on academic interests shared between students and teachers. Communication with teachers is encouraged as a means for students to autonomously seek out further knowledge and gain confidence in themselves and their teachers. It helps in finding out if teachers have provided students a place where they can have a lively discussion with a teacher, and to evaluate the educational environment as to whether there is effective communication going on between teachers and students that helps enhance students' intellectual interests (Högskoleverket, 2007).

According to this survey question's results, half of students participated in autonomous discussions, and were more involved in classes. However, students, overall, communicate less with teachers outside of classes. Thirty per cent of students participated in assignment discussions with teachers or tutors during classes. Only 10% discussed ideas from textbooks with teachers outside of classes, and engaged in social or academic activity while collaborating with teachers. This is a strong indication that teachers encourage students to be involved in classes and have more democratic relationships with students, which is an element of education that has been emphasized in the educational system.

Figure 4. Communication Skills



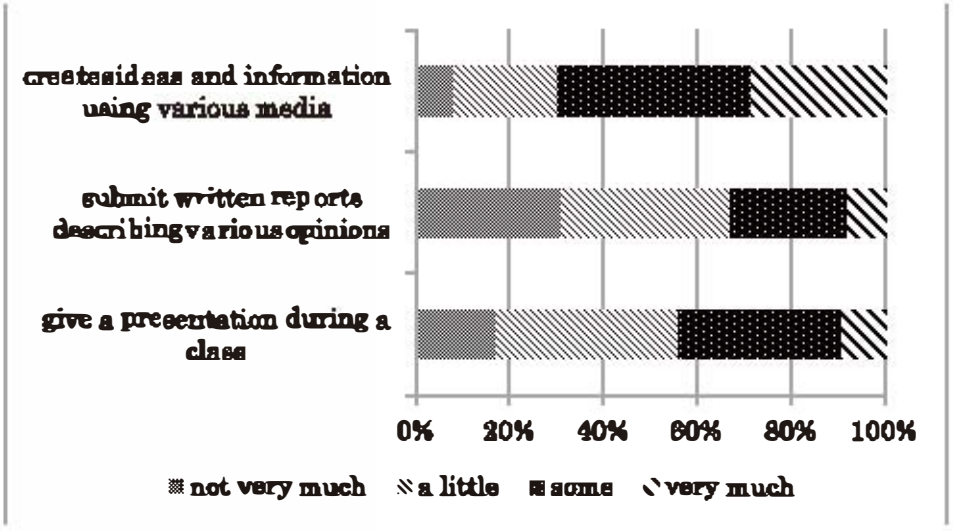
Source: Högskoleverket. (2007) Rapport 2007:20 R, Studentspegeln 2007.

4.5 Reading and Writing Skills

This survey question was meant to discover how much students worked at producing written reports, presentations and read books. Students could have written papers and put together presentations by using various articles, media and the Internet. According to the results, students wrote an average of one to four reports, and read five to six books. Meanwhile, 58% of student did very little, if any, "handwritten reports describing various thoughts," and nearly 40% gave themselves low marks for "systemizing existing thoughts, information and experience in order to discover a new interpretation" in an item involving *(2) analytical thinking*. Students tended to write or produce presentations concerning only one opinion instead of referring to various opinions and thoughts.

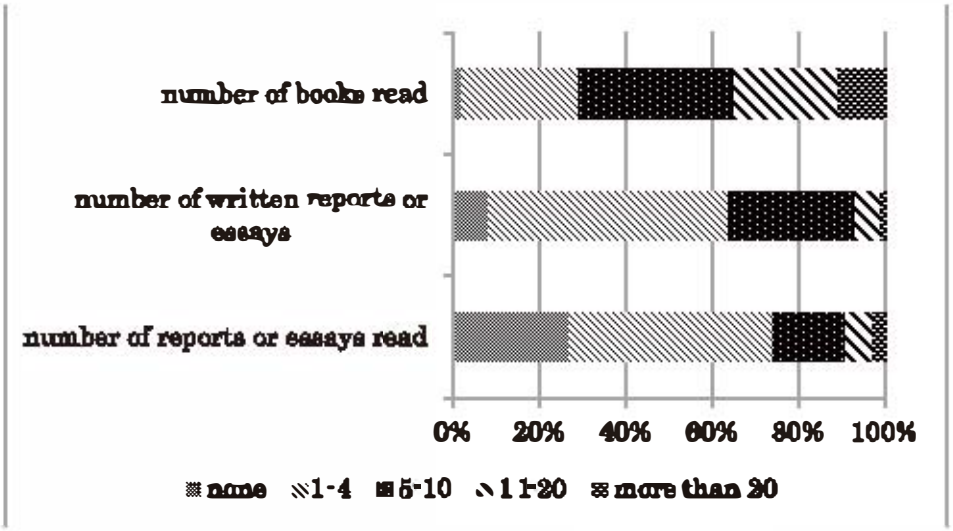
These results indicated that students were provided more opportunities to produce presentations than hand in written reports within their educational environment. A teacher training program, especially, has the most number of submitted written reports and presentations (Högskoleverket, 2007).

Figure 5. Students' Evaluation for Reading and Writing Skills



Source: Högskoleverket. (2007) Rapport 2007:20 R, Studentspegeln 2007.

Figure 6. Students' Evaluation for the Quantity of Reading and Writing



Source: Högskoleverket. (2007) Rapport 2007:20 R, Studentspegeln 2007.

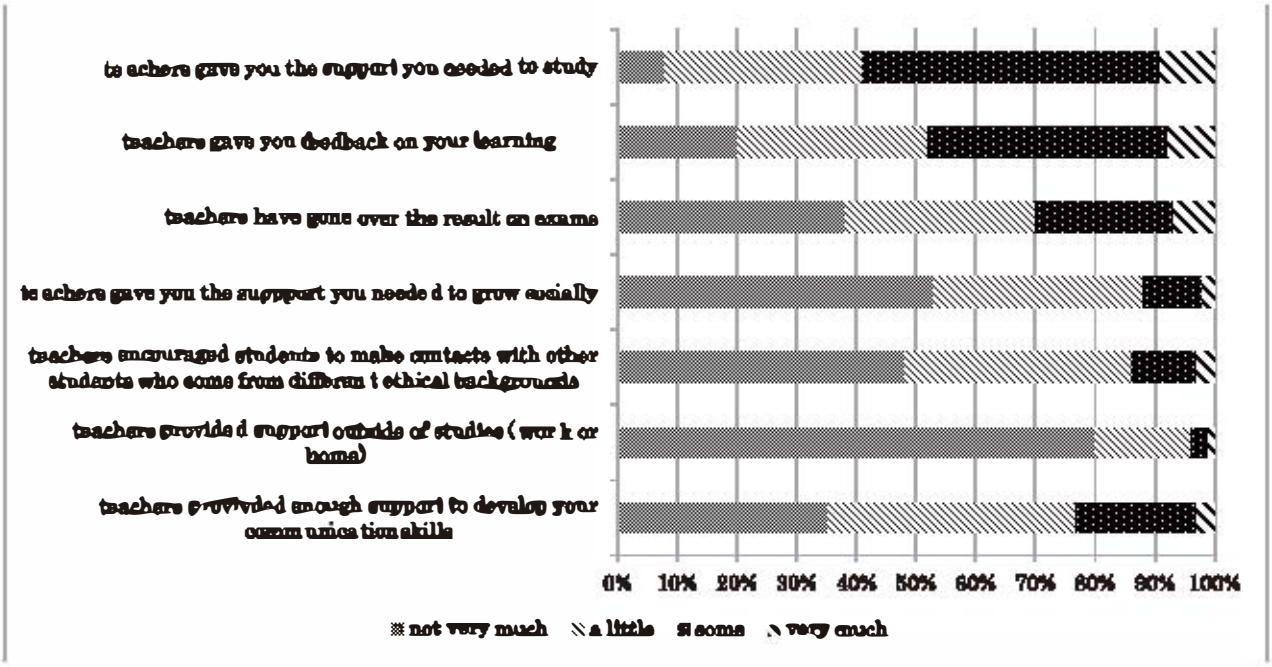
4.6 Teachers' Involvement

This item is to figure out how much support is given to students by teachers. In the item "necessary support was provided by teachers for your learning" 60% of students received necessary support from teachers and appropriate feedback concerning their learning. When preparing for reports, presentations or classes, students evaluated if their teachers provided enough support.

Teachers are required to get involved in students' learning in order to cultivate the students' ethical perspective in reference to the result of "teachers support students outside of studies" and "teachers encourage students to make

contacts with other students from different cultural and ethical backgrounds." Students gave a low marks for these questions, with 80% answering "not very much" or "a little". This involved another aspect in showing the relationship between teachers and students in reference to the result of *(4) Communication Skills*. Only 10% of students answered that they counselled with teachers concerning their future plans, which indicates that their relationship is not an interactive one but unrequited. Teachers, therefore, are required to not only be involved in conveying academic knowledge but also to encourage and cultivate students' ethical values.

Figure 7. Teachers' Involvement



Source: Högskoleverket (2007) Rapport 2007:20 R, Studentspegeln 2007.

Conclusion

Students' learning outcomes are regarded as important in terms of quality assurance in higher education. Learning outcomes are classified into three categories: knowledge and understanding, competence and skills, and judgment and approach. Students are required to gain knowledge about their own field of study, autonomous learning attitudes, critical thinking, problem solving skills, discussion skills, and communication skills and cultivate ethical perspectives.

The Higher Education Ordinance clearly states the learning outcomes that are the standard from which to evaluate students' achievements in program operation evaluation. The evaluation process or approach is based on students' achievements, thesis, and assessors that give yes/no answers: if their thesis is completes or not. HEIs that receive a high mark of "Very High Quality" are given an additional grant.

According to the results of a student survey done in 2007, students evaluated themselves on their ability to cultivate general knowledge and analytical thinking. They took actively participated in discussions, presentations, writing reports and collaborating with other students. Those kinds of methods have been emphasized in the

educational environments of basic schools. Students have gradually cultivated communication skills and cooperativeness with others since the lower grades. On the other hand, students gave themselves low marks for communication and involvement with teachers. This suggests a level of more involvement and encouragement is needed in order to cultivate students' ethical perspectives and learning achievements.

In consideration of an evaluation approach based on learning outcomes and the results of a student survey, this approach measured students' achievements in a unified way. The current approach focusing on a thesis is difficult for evaluation as to whether students acquire the outcomes which are clarified in the Higher Education Ordinance; especially how ethical perspectives relate to individual values, leading to an unfavourable result. Evaluating only the thesis is not enough to figure out how much individuals' values have been cultivated. As Yamada insists, it is difficult to assess students' knowledge, values and experiences by direct evaluation. Also, this type of program evaluation requires additional funding, and an evaluation approach only focusing on thesis should be reconsidered.

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Footnotes:

[1] The agency was in charge of mainly admission process from students from home and abroad.

[2] From an interview with an evaluation manager at Högskoleverket done on September 4th, 2012.

[3] There is some criticism about the linkage between evaluation results and funding allocation. This is because HIEs with fewer programs will get fewer resources, resulting in qualitative differences between HIEs, and thus conditions will further deteriorate (Prop. 2009/10:139).

[4] From an Interview with a quality promotion officer at Uppsala University done on September 3rd, 2012.

[5] From Interviews with a quality promotion officer executed at Uppsala University (September 3rd, 2012), Lund University (September 6th, 2012) and Linnaeus University (September 7th, 2012).

スウェーデンにおける大学生の学習成果とその評価方法について

- 全国学生調査の結果からみる評価方法の考察 -

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要旨

本稿は、スウェーデンにおける学習成果（ラーニング・アウトカムズ）の評価視点およびその手法にどのような特徴があるのかを検討することを目的とする。また本稿におけるスウェーデンのラーニング・アウトカムズの定義のもと、スウェーデンの大学教育が学生にどのような学習環境を提供し、学生のどのようなスキルを形成してきたのかという点にも着目する。具体的には、2007年に実施された全国学生調査をもとに、大学での教育を経て学生がどのような知識、スキルを身に付けたのかを考察する。最後に、学習成果を評価方法とした現行のプログラム評価に関する課題と展望について考究する。

学習成果の構築段階や背景は国によって異なっており、スウェーデンでは2011年に学習成果を重視した質保証枠組が構築された。現行の質保証は、プログラム評価とアクレディテーションで構成されており、プログラム評価において学生の学習成果に焦点を当てて評価が行われる。この新たな質保証のもと、まさに現在国内のすべての高等教育機関においてプログラム評価が実施されている。そのため学習成果を焦点にしたプログラム評価の実態について考察するには資料が十分ではなく、また十分な研究もなされていないのが現状である。

本文では、ラーニング・アウトカムズの概念を整理するにあたってコンピテンス論、OECD（経済協力開発機構）によるAHELO(the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes)、キー・コンピテンシー、学士力に関する先行研究を取り上げている。次にスウェーデンにおけるラーニング・アウトカムズについて整理し、質保証枠組、学習成果の枠組みがいかに構築されているのかについて考究する。ラーニング・アウトカムズの定義をした上で、質保証枠組み、学習成果によるプログラム評価について考察することにより、スウェーデンは高等教育を通じていかなる人材を育成しようとしているのかを検討することが可能だと考える。これらの概念的整理を踏まえて、全国学生調査の結果をもとに学生のスキル、学習志向の実態について考究する。さらに、学生の学習志向の傾向とあわせて現行の学習成果を評価方法としたプログラム評価に関する課題と展望について考察する。