

Increased marginalization of students in Sweden

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The successful Swedish model of reducing the impact of students' different social, cultural and economic backgrounds on academic outcome is severely threatened after 20 years of educational reforms. This is the main point made by Docent (Reader) Girma Berhanu from the University of Gothenburg in *International Journal of Special Education*.

Some of the previously very positive trends in the Swedish school system seem to have been put in reverse over the past 20 years, and [students](#) with special needs, immigrant students and socially disadvantaged students are getting the bad end of the deal. These groups are not receiving the support they need and therefore are not reaching the educational targets to the same extent as other students.

Political buzzword

In his article published in *International Journal of Special Education*, Girma Berhanu from the Department of Education and Special Education at the University of Gothenburg points to widening differences among schools and municipalities and among pupils.

An increased emphasis on devolution, marketisation, competition, standardisation, individual choice and development of new profiles is counteracting the values of diversity, equality and

inclusion. 'What's paradoxical is that the trend of increasing differences is occurring at the same time as politicians are promoting a school for everyone and the concept of inclusion has become a political buzzword,' says Berhanu.

Increased marginalisation

Several studies have shown that students from the mentioned groups can benefit greatly from being taught together with classmates without special needs. 'The Swedish development is not good. It is particularly problematic that more and more students who need extra support, socially disadvantaged students and immigrant students are becoming marginalised and are having severe problems in the classroom,' says Berhanu.

Yet, there are ways to improve the situation. 'Swedish schools need more staff with proper education, smaller classes and increased state governance of schools,' says Berhanu. 'Sweden also needs better evaluation methods, something that should be integrated in every implementation of school-related programmes, policies or ordinances.'

More information: *International Journal of Special Education*. Even in Sweden? Excluding the Included: Some Reflections on the Consequences of New Policies on Educational Processes and Outcomes, and Equity in Education [www.internationaljournalofspeccfm?y=2010&v=25&n=3](http://www.internationaljournalofspec... .cfm?y=2010&v=25&n=3)

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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