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**Fullriggaren Malevik, a Swedish School**

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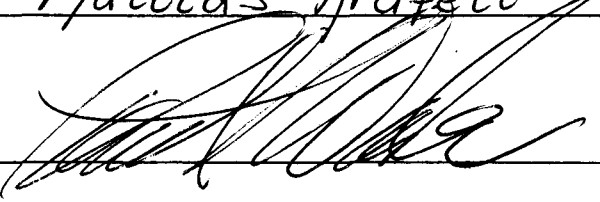
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## Introduction

This paper examines a modern Swedish school, Fullriggaren Malevik. The school is located on the west coast of Sweden, a few miles south of Gothenburg. This paper explores the history of the school, from its start in 1992 to the present. This paper is divided into several parts based on different functional areas. This paper gives examples of how the Swedish school system works, compared to the new way of teaching at Fullriggaren Malevik. Fullriggaren Malevik uses new kinds of teaching methodologies, which are integrated into the different classes. This paper examines the effectiveness of Fullriggaren Malevik in comparison to other schools in Sweden.

## General Information about the Swedish elementary and junior high school system.

In the traditional Swedish elementary school system, children start their education at the age of 7, similar to the American system. However, Swedish children need to stay in elementary school at least six years. American elementary schools vary between 5 to 6 years. Swedish education is concentrated on learning basic subjects, Mathematics, Swedish, History, Geography, Sports, Religion, and a mix of Natural Science.

In grade four, children get the chance to learn English. When students reach the seventh grade they start junior high, which lasts three years. In junior high, education expands into more specific fields, such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, "Home knowledge", Child care, Civics, and Computer Science. Students also have to choose additional subjects like languages. Most students study at least one extra language besides Swedish and English, primarily German or French.

The school schedule for children in elementary school gets progressively harder. The older students get, the heavier their work load and the longer their days. A normal school day for first grade students is 9 am to 2 p.m. with breaks between classes and for lunch. When students reach grade 6, classes normally start at 8 am and continue until 3. Normal elementary school classes last 60 minutes.

Students in junior high increase their work load, with longer days and fewer breaks. Classes are either 40, 60, or 80 minutes long.

In both elementary and junior high, students get divided into classes, based on subject. Classes have different teachers depending on the subject, but will have one main teacher who is responsible for students' performance in all subjects. Classes stay together until junior high when they break up into new classes. Students may ask to remain with their old friends in their new class, which normally is permitted. In this way, the school can separate students unable to work together and mix up the classes with students from other elementary schools.

Most elementary schools are separated from junior high schools. However, this system is changing. By integrating the elementary school with the junior high school, schools can save costs, in building sport facilities, cafeterias, and libraries.

In Sweden there are a few private or free schools, but the main schools in Sweden are run by the government. All education from elementary level to University level is paid for by the government. Each separate school is dependent on how much money the government gives them. Once schools receive their money, they are free to disburse the money as they see fit.

## Background

During the 1980's, a discussion started about creating new modern schools. The objective was to create a school that would be a model of how to create a school with limited resources. They hoped to create schools that could be used for different activities, therefore decreasing the costs.

They decided the school would not use school busses as normal schools do, but rather parents would take their children to school. They also decided all employees would work in teams. All people would have access to rent the facility. They also decided that Fullriggaren Malevik should be an independent unit with responsibility for both activities and budget.

At the end of the 80's groups from the different departments met to combine ideas and requests, finally presenting their suggestions to the architect. This extensive process have proved very valuable because employees know best how to use the different facilities in order to achieve their pedagogic goals. It should be pointed out that facilities do not make teaching better, but do help create a better environment, which can improve performance levels.

In 1992 the school was ready to open. The name, Fullriggaren Malevik, was chosen by the employees. The name means the full sailing ship of Malevik. The name was appropriate because the school's location is right by the ocean.



## The Organization

Personnel was hired in the spring of 1992. The principal, Agnetha Ardfelt, had the final decision of who to employ. The people employed ranged from teachers to gardeners to administrative staff. By having the opportunity to choose her own staff, Ardfelt selected people who agreed with an integrated way of teaching. A staff that can work together is far more effective than one that cannot.

Ardfelt said that getting the chance to start an organization from scratch, without any restrictions, was a real challenge requiring her to use all her past experience.

Since the school started, colleagues from around Sweden and also from foreign schools have been interested in how the school works. The impressive results the school has achieved makes it a good example for other schools.

According to Ardfelt, it is important to mix employees' decision making with decisions by the top of the organization. Ardfelt has her own model to achieve this decision making integration:

- a well prepared daily/weekly/monthly plan
- clear information, clear rules and organization
- well planned calendar for students, parents and personnel
- clear routines

She thinks it is very important that everybody in the organization agree about what goals should be achieved. Everybody needs to be able to work together and disputes have to be resolved. Ardfelt tries to get employees to do non-job related activities with the staff.

Her main goal is creating joy and humor among employees, helping them create ties which help in daily work.

Once the personnel was appointed, they held a meeting to decide the main goal for the school, discuss questions, and resolve conflicts. The total staff at that time was only 28 people. Today, 7 years later, the staff has grown to 65. By letting staff take part in the decision making process, conflicts can often be avoided. Decisions are made by those most affected by the decisions

In the case of interior design and equipment, the personnel at Fullriggaren Malevik were asked if they would be interested in equipping the facility themselves. They saw this as an opportunity to influence their working environment and accepted the offer. The basic goal was to create a beautiful, practical, economical, and flexible school. Even if this caused a lot of work, they succeeded in creating a school that is not only beautiful, but also has the most modern equipment at a cost below the budget.

The basic goal for Fullriggaren Malevik is to get the organization as horizontal as possible to shorten the decision process (see figure next page). By making the organization more horizontal, people at the top get better insights into the organization, and can more easily change processes that do not work effectively. Under this system, there must be care taken in selecting top managers.

Students do not work in age oriented classes. Classes are a mixture of students of different ages. This gives more advanced younger students to work with older more experienced students. Students get a chance to study with students at their same level.

### The working environment

The school is very new and all equipment very modern. The school is clean of garbage, and drugs. Reports of violence are rare. By integrating the students in the process of developing the school, the school avoids many problems and better keeps the school in good shape. Each classroom is equipped with the latest technology, including microwaves so students can cook food during their breaks. The school is also located in a very nice area next to the ocean and a forest. All of these components help to develop the best working environment for students and hopefully helps them in their school work.

## Sports

### Purpose:

Students get a chance to learn different games, dances and sporting events. They are exposed to a wide range of sports, helping them to choose the sport fitting them best. Students also learn how eating right, exercising regularly and getting outdoors can improve their physical and psychological condition. Sports education takes into consideration that students have different physical capabilities, tries to get the different genders to work together and also ties foreign students and Swedish students, helping them develop an understanding and respect for the others' background.

### Sports in grade 1-3

During the student's first year at Fullriggaren Malevik, sports teaching is devoted to getting the students to develop basic movement skills. Since children at this age develop at very different rates, it is important that each child gets a chance and is not ignored. This is done with the help of different games, different apparatus races, and exhibitions, allowing children to find solutions that fit their own level. Many of the sports practices at Fullriggaren Malevik try to get students to help each other and work in teams. Since there is variation in ages in the classes at Malevik, older students get a chance to help younger. It also helps older students having movement problems to find younger students to work with. In many cases, older students motivate the younger to perform better and work harder.

In sports teaching there is always supposed to be at least two professors, who are in charge and ready to help if help is needed. To get the students more motivated, teachers at Fullriggaren Malevik try to get students to take active part in dance shows, cycling, swimming, middle group sports, and older student sports.

One positive result correlated with sports education is the low number of days students are sick. This number is affected by a number of other reasons, but sports education has a healthy effect on students. By getting the right work-out, students work their different muscle groups helping them to keep healthy.

## Music

### Music is movement

Young children need to move around, but also need peace and quiet. Music teachers at Fullriggaren Malevik teach rhythm to younger children. Every rhythm class introduces melody, activity, and relaxation, and motivates students to create their own songs, dramas and musicals. To imitate is a basic way of expression in music. Children learn rhythms and movements through imitation.

### All children are musical "geniuses"

At Fullriggaren Malevik, children are given a chance to develop their unique musical talents. Children get chances to try a variety of instruments and/or sing. However, musical talent is not only expressed through singing or playing an instrument; it can also be expressed in rhythm and movement.

Children with difficulties in speech, reading, and writing have received help through rhythm practice like music therapy. The music center in the brain works like a support system for other functions. Rhythm can create order out of chaos. For example, people who stutter when they speak, rarely do it when they sing. This is why they try to integrate rhythm into childrens' education.

Children also get a chance to create small musicals, which they work on together and present to either parents or other students. Children also get a chance to pick famous pieces and imitate them. At Christmas and the end of spring, there are ceremonies including dance numbers performed by the children. Acting or singing in front of an

audience not only helps a student in music but also in other classes, because it improves that person's ability to perform in front of an audience.

The older students get, the more freedom and responsibility they receive. They start doing cabarets, creating their own music. They have advanced technology to assist them. As students get older, they have a chance to choose more of what they want to do. The professor does not require the class to do the same thing, which is a way of stimulating students' music interest. Fullriggaren Malevik also has a music club. Almost half of all students are members, although the club's activities are held during the students' free time

## English

English has, since the mid fifties, been the dominant second language in Swedish schools. Students start learning English in fourth grade and continue until they finish high school. Consequently, the average Swedish student know more English than students from many other countries. However, academic methods have stopped developing, and new teaching methods need to be discovered.

Many students get tired of English education. At Fullriggaren Malevik, they try to avoid this by using new teaching methods. Still, much of the education is through traditional text and vocabulary. At Fullriggaren Malevik they have changed this system. To make the students more motivated, they let students choose from among different texts. What they want to read. Professors at Fullriggaren Malevik try to avoid old textbooks. Old texts are often only at one difficulty level, causing the students to find them either too easy or too difficult, leading to a loss of interest. Therefore, the professors try to use shorter books which are connected to society.

Since a relatively small part of the world speaks Swedish, it has always been important for Swedish people to learn foreign languages. Since Sweden joined the European union, the need for language skills has increased even more. However, in today's society students do not start on an even level when they start their English classes, some students are exposed to English much more than others.

At Fullriggaren Malevik they concluded that English education must change radically. English education is not adapted to society, which must be one of the main



objectives in the teaching. English education has four primary goals: hearing, speaking, reading and writing. Traditionally Swedish students have had a good understanding in hearing and reading; however, they have been lacking in speaking and writing. To improve these parts of English education, Fullriggaren Malevik is trying new methods:

### Speaking

To improve students' speech, they try to get students to hear as much spoken English as possible. From the beginning they try to get the students to talk and not feel afraid to be wrong. It is important to correct students in a way that does not hurt their feelings. If corrections are pointed out, they have to be done to the whole group, not to a specific person. To improve their speech, students also do verbal presentations. After presentations, discussion is encouraged and the professors try to get everybody to take an active part.

### Writing

To get students to develop their writing skills, students learn basic phrases, like "Come here", "Sit down", and "Close the door." By teaching the basics of writing, students will hopefully do their own research if there is something they don't understand.

### Conclusion

All students are on different levels. To be successful, teaching has to be adjusted. The level of difficulty has to vary for every student, which is the reason why a mix in ages is good. A normal Swedish school does not have the age mixed classes, and does not give the students as much freedom as at Fullriggaren Malevik. Looking at the superior results

as the students at Fullriggaren Malevik performed, we can conclude that Fullriggaren Maleviks methods are working more effectively.

The main goals for English teaching at Fullriggaren Malevik are:

- Keeping the joy and curiosity in learning English.
- Staying active.
- Feeling important.
- Feeling productive.
- Feeling progress and getting the chance to try bigger challenges.
- Learning to take responsibility for your own learning and development.
- Daring to let your voice get heard, express your opinion and back it up.
- Getting a chance, through another language, to learn about people, literature and cultures.

Fullriggaren Malevik also has an exchange program with schools in Spain and Ireland. This gives older students a chance to travel to foreign countries and practice their English. Like other Swedish schools, Fullriggaren Malevik also offers opportunities for children with another primary language than Swedish a chance to practice this language individually with a professor.

According to tests done nationwide, Fullriggaren is performing better than other schools. A reason to this trend may be Fullriggaren's different teaching methods. Traditional Swedish schools use traditional textbook and vocabulary exercises. Traditional schools have not tried to modernize their teaching, and are not adjusting to

progress in society. The normal schools place their students in classes based on age, not on level of English proficiency. These are some of the factors Fullriggaren Malevik improved.

### Mathematics

In mathematics, the teachers at Fullriggaren Malevik work from a problem based system. In a PB-system, students are given a chance to learn and find solutions by themselves. In mathematics, there are a number of different ways of reaching a solution. It is wrong to say that some ways are right and others wrong. Students get a chance to find the solution by themselves before the teacher helps them. Since many children have different talents for mathematics, they try to give every student a chance to establish their own speed. This helps both students having difficulties and ones without difficulties. Age mixed classes also help this process. The GPA average at Fullriggaren Malevik is far above the average for the country.

As an extra element, Fullriggaren Malevik provides a mathematics workshop open to all students. The workshop provides support for students needing extra help, and also for students working at advanced levels who need extra challenges.

Mathematics is the class most benefiting from Fullriggaren's new pedagogic methods. This is not only shown in better grades, but also students' performance on standardized tests. Many other schools, realizing how well Fullriggaren Malevik is doing, are inviting employees from Fullriggaren Malevik to talk about their teaching methods. Through cooperation between different schools, new teaching methods are spreading.

The higher performance by the students at Fullriggaren can be explained by noting that normal Swedish schools do not have age integrating teaching, and do not offer students the freedom Fullriggaren Malevik does.

## Swedish

The most important class for students later life is Swedish. Good language skills in Swedish will be helpful in all classes for the rest of their education.

Swedish is divided into two parts: grammar and literature. When students reach high school, grammar and literature are separate required classes. In elementary, and junior high school, they remain as one class. Swedish, along with mathematics, gets the most time in the weekly schedule.

In the grammar part, students learn rules and the best ways of using the language. Professors at Malevik teach grammar in the standard way from a textbook.

In the literature part, professors try to mix different literature from Swedish and foreign authors and students are encouraged to read on their own. Presentations are also practiced. It is important for students to be able to do presentations. At Fullriggaren Malevik they have realized the importance of good communication skills and offer Rhetoric as an optional class, helping students to use language effectively.

Tests shows that students at Fullriggaren Malevik are performing better than students from other schools. However, since the teaching methods used still are similar to the traditional ways of teaching, the differences are not as obvious as in other classes. Yet, results still show students learn better by being part of the decision-making process, deciding what kind of books to use.

## Rhetoric

At Fullriggaren Malevik, they have found that good communication is essential if students are to succeed. Rhetoric class is not normally offered at Swedish schools. At Fullriggaren Malevik rhetoric class is not required but is offered to those interested. So far the interest has been high.

One's rhetoric improves through practice. By putting emphasis on discussion, students get a chance to practice how to most effectively present an idea to their audience. The professor supervises and points out things and procedures that can improve arguments.

By learning how to present arguments, students have a definite advantage over students from other schools. By learning to communicate effectively, students will be able to present themselves in a better way. This is very valuable at job interviews and in life generally.

Normal Swedish schools do not offer a special rhetoric class, but they include it in the normal Swedish class. This puts the students at Fullriggaren Malevik in an advantage, because they will have more rhetoric than normal student.

## Computer & Media

Computer & Media is also a new class for Fullriggaren Malevik. The school has the latest technology, including a recording and stereo room. Society is becoming increasingly computerized. It will be necessary for today's students to understand and use computer hardware and software. With this in mind, students directly get involved with computers when they start school at the age of six. Every class has its own lap-tops, which are used in most classes. In this way, students get a chance to see how computers can be used in every field. All students at an early age are capable of using Microsoft Office, Corel Draw and other software programs.

Teaching not only involves computers but also the use of media equipment. Students learn how to make films and use film equipment, such as video cameras, editing machines, and special effects equipment. They also learn about technological improvements and the history of media development.

The professors in charge of this teaching receive special courses to be informed and up to date in every part of their teaching. Professors are also available to students outside of class. By getting students involved in different projects, teachers get more interest and enthusiasm from their students.

It is hard to compare other schools in this respect, because most other school do not offer this class. In the long-run, graduates will have an advantage over students from other schools. By having the knowledge to surf the net and handle networks at an early age, students will have an easier time using computers later in their education.

Since computers are integrated in almost all companies today, students with computer skills will have an advantage over students that lack computer skills. At normal Swedish schools, computer classes does not start before junior high, which gives Fullriggaren Malevik's students an advantage.





### School Performance in Comparison to other schools

Fullriggaren Malevik has, in its relatively short history, shown that new pedagogic methods outperform old methods. In Sweden, there are tests in each subject that show students' performances between different schools. These tests are performed in grades 2, 5, 7, and 9. On a five point scale, the average grade in the nation is a 3.0. At Fullriggaren Malevik, the average grade is 4.0; one of the highest in the country. In mathematics, Fullriggaren Malevik's score was as high as 4.3. In the nation as a whole, approximately 11 percent of students fail at least one class. At Fullriggaren Malevik everyone passed all their classes. Fullriggaren Malevik's scores are also higher than other schools in the same region, proving results are not a result of cultural segregation. These improvements are the result of innovative teaching methods. Also, students are working in one of the most modern schools in the country and are surrounded by a very good working environment.

Another way of evaluating how the school is doing is through surveys. According to TEMO, a large information service, students and parents believe that Fullriggaren Malevik is providing a good education. These statistics are shown on the next page. These numbers are only one indication of how the school is doing but, according to all surveys, Fullriggaren Malevik has proven itself and its teaching methods to be superior over traditional school methods.

## Final words

In this research paper, I have tried to show how one of Sweden's most modern schools is operating. By documenting how Fullriggaren Malevik is working other schools can imitate some teaching techniques.

I would like to thank principal Agnetha Ardfelt and all employees at Fullriggaren Malevik. Without their cooperation I would never been able to complete the research. I would also like to thank Professor David Wade at Northern Illinois University, for supervising the research.