

JÄMLIKHETENS VILLKOR

Demos, imperium och pedagogik i
Bretagne, Tunisien, Tornedalen och Lappmarken,
1880–1925

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Abstract

Julia Nordblad: *The Conditions of Equality: Demos, Empire and Pedagogy in Brittany, Tunisia, Torne Valley and Lapland, 1880–1925. [Jämlikhetens villkor: Demos, imperium och pedagogik i Bretagne, Tunisien, Tornedalen och Lappmarken, 1880–1925.]* PhD dissertation in Swedish, with a summary in French, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, 2013. *Department of Literature, history of Ideas, and Religion*, University of Gothenburg, Box 200, SE-405 30, Göteborg.

At the end of the 19th Century, the direct method was developed and institutionalized for national language teaching among Breton-speakers in Brittany and Finnish-speakers in the Torne Valley. Despite criticism from both pedagogical and political standpoints, the use of the direct method soon appeared to be a non-negotiable condition for these groups. In the same period, pedagogical models were institutionalized for Arab-speakers in the French protectorate Tunisia, and reindeer herding Sami children in Lapland, in which direct method instruction was denied, and alleged cultural characteristics, such as Coran pedagogy and nomadism, were enhanced. The thesis examines the differing pedagogical programs outlined, and the extensive debates they spurred.

At the time, universal suffrage and parliamentarism were established in Sweden and France. Universal suffrage invokes an imagined community of individuals, the demos, constituted as equal despite their differing qualities. At the same time, the demos is always limited, and its limits are articulated in terms of similarity and difference, i. e. in terms of qualities. Every attempt to institute the demos therefore poses the question of how similar the equals have to be. The main argument of the thesis is that the direct method offered an answer to this question, turning the pedagogical issues into a magnifying glass for conflicts about the political conditions of different groups. The insistence on and denial of direct method instruction correspond to the inclusion and exclusion, respectively, of these groups into and from the community of equals.

Applying the historiographical perspective of entangled histories, the elaboration of differing pedagogies and political conditions for the Finnish-speakers and Sami in Sweden, and the Bretons and Arab-speaking Tunisians within the French pedagogical territory, respectively, is described as an imperial differentiation. The imperial community was co-existing and conflicting with the demos, as a political community and a political language used to legitimise policies for groups excluded from it.

Applying the perspective of comparative history, the thesis shows how the direct method played a threefold and homologous role in the cases of Sweden and France. First, it functioned as an articulation of the conditions to be met for entering the community of equals, in terms of required skills. Second, by its pedagogical form it made these skills possible to acquire, and at the same time rendered them a maternal quality. Third, in doing so, it opened a possibility for the groups excluded from the demos to legitimise their demands for inclusion. The concluding argument of the thesis is that both an expanding empire-state like France, and a post-imperial nation-state like Sweden, acted alternately in the modes of empire and demos as political communities and languages.

Keywords

Direct method, equality, imperialism, universal suffrage, political languages, language teaching, minority education, history of education, intuition, inner colonialism, assimilation, Brittany, Tunisia, Sami, Finnish speakers in Sweden, Young Tunisians, entangled histories, comparative history, history of ideas.