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The Planetspeak Discourse of Lifelong Learning in Sweden: What is an Educable Adult?

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This article focuses on the idea of the educable adult subject in Sweden and the ways this idea has re-emerged in different practices during the 20th century. It's a policy analysis where official documents from the 20th century and early 21st century concerned with adult education in Sweden are analysed based on the Foucauldian notion of governmentality. The results show that the idea of the educable adult subject has been present during the major part of the 20th century. But there are differences in how it is inscribed into the practices. The main difference is that the educable subject today is created in relation to a new rationality of governing where it is governed and constructed through its own choices and actions instead of through institutions based on knowledge produced by the social sciences and experts. Further, the ambition today is that everyone should be included in lifelong learning. At the same time, these ambitions also create exclusion. What happens to those who cannot or do not want to participate in lifelong learning? I argue that such practices of inclusion/exclusion are present in all the documents analysed, but that today, this practice has taken a specific shape.

Introduction

In contemporary narratives about the welfare state in 'the West', lifelong learning is put forward as a remedy to keep the individual nations, and the European Union, in the forefront of education, research, economy, etc. Adult education, learning at work, learning during leisure time are all illustrated as contexts where learning is taking place as a way of realising the vision of lifelong learning (Ministry of Education 1998, European Commission 2001). In these narratives, there is a promise of betterment for all. Everyone is to be included in lifelong learning as a way of achieving his/her desires in life. The construction of learning related to different practices is not only a way of reaching 'paradise' (Popkewitz 2003), it also constructs historical sites for governing. For a few hundred years, education has been a practice of governing, a way of managing populations and a way of achieving 'the betterment' of society and forming desirable subjects. Society and subjects to be realised are constructions interwoven with different historical discourses mapped in time and space. What is characterized as the desirable subject today may not be the same subject constructed 50 years or 100 years ago. Concepts travel through time and space, appearing in some practices at certain times and disappearing in other times and places and then perhaps reinventing themselves in another practice. Nothing is stable; everything is ever changing (Foucault 1977,

Hultqvist *et al* (2002) argue that today we can see a pedagogicalization of the state. The notion of pedagogy, a way of governing that has been present in education for a couple of centuries, is spreading to other practices besides the school. We can see how the discourse of pedagogy, with its specific ways of reasoning and expressing itself, is inscribed in the practice of correctional treatment, the library, public health, teachers' education, etc. In this article, I will argue that lifelong learning can be seen as an expression of this new rationality of governing and as a pedagogical technique that is inscribed in different practices not only

concerned with formal education. It is also inscribed in the person's everyday life. You are constructed as learning all the time, during leisure time, at work and in education. Such a way of reasoning about learning seems to indicate a new way of reasoning about how to govern and what to govern.

The narratives of the lifelong learner can be seen as a new global planetspeak discourse (Nóvoa 2002); a way of reasoning that seems to have no structural roots, no social locations and no origin. It is part of a 'worldwide bible' that is on every tongue and it seems to provide solutions to the problems faced. It travels through the world and is inscribed in different countries and practices where it takes different forms. The specific case of Sweden discussed in this article can help us to understand this planetspeak discourse as being historically related to the problem of governing and its changing contours of the present. More precisely, in this article I will focus on questions such as: What visions of the future are constructed in the policy documents? How are the subjects constructed as being and what are they to become? What kinds of techniques are created to govern these subjects? I will, in other words, focus on how the concept of lifelong learning is inscribing itself in the practice of adult education and what the effects of power/knowledge relations are on how we think, what is possible to say, what is normal/abnormal. In this discourse of lifelong learning, an educable adult subject is constructed that can, and should, learn all the time. This idea will be traced in time as a searchlight that will allow us to perspectivize the ways the adult learner are constructed and governed today.

Research focused on educational issues related to Foucauldian perspectives has been extensive in the last decade. The first anthology on this issue was published in 1990 (Ball 1990). Since then, several anthologies have been published drawing on Foucault (for example, Hultqvist and Petersson 1995, Barry et al 1996, Dean and Hindess 1998, Popkewitz and Brennan 1998, Popkewitz et al 2001, Baker and Heyning 2004). Genealogy and governmentality dominate these perspectives. A focus on political rationalities of government, is also the case in a study on educational policy in South Africa carried out by Tikly (2003). Nikolas Rose (1996, 19991, 1999b) has discussed in several books the changing contours of governing that have emerged during the last couple of centuries. Assessment as a technique of governing, which is a central technique of governing discussed by Foucault (1991), is, for example, focused on by Graham and Neu (2004) and Atkinson (1998). Research focused on the educable subject, as in this article, has been carried out by Fendler (1998, 1999). She historicises the educable subject by analysing, amongst others, texts by Plato. Research focused on the adult subject has been performed by Dean (1998) in an article where he focuses on how the adult subject (the unemployed jobseeker) in Australia is governed. Richard Edwards has (2002, 2003), and together with Nicoll (2004), focused on the adult learner in relation to Foucault. There is also a project in progress in Sweden focused on sites where pedagogical practices express themselves, and where the educable subject is discussed. The different practices studied in the project are the teacher training program, the public health area, the correctional system and the library (Hultqvist et al 2002).

In conclusion, there seems to be a limit to research focused on the adult educable subject guided by governmentality. Further, most of the research on governmentality referred to above discusses governing practices in countries other than Sweden. Some of the results from these studies might be applicable to the Swedish case, others not. Planetspeak discourses are inscribed in particular ways in the 'local'. Therefore, this article can contribute to an understanding of the ways lifelong learning have been inscribed in the case of Sweden and to how this local discourse contributes to the understanding of the planetspeak discourse of lifelong learning. The analysis is part of a br@ader project where the governing of the adult learner in Swedish municipal adult education, higher education and liberal adult education is analysed (Fejes, 2005a, 2006, Andersson and Fejes 2005).

A governmentality approach

To problematize lifelong learning and the educable adult learner, I have chosen to take my starting point in the Foucauldian concept of governmentality. The concept of governmentality is used by Foucault (2003a) to describe his view of how political governance is practiced. Governmentality helps us to understand the advanced forms of modern exercise of power and its different expressions (Hultqvist and Petersson 1995). Foucault (2003b) argues that the mentalities of governing have undergone a change during the last few hundred years. From a repressive centralized power of the prince to punish, to a more decentralized way of governing through institutions and the subjects themselves. As statistics and science emerged, population was made into an entity that could be measured and governed; statistics was the condition of possibility for the population to emerge. Through the emergence of the modern social state the exercise of power has become more fines-meshed, expanded and scattered. The result is an increased governbility through regulations, standardisations of peoples conduct etc. (Hultqvist and Peterson 1995).

The concept of governmentality has two different points of departure; politics is about governing and governing is based on the taken-for-granted constructions of the things that are to be governed. The main focus of a rationality of governing is the question of how to govern; the conduct of conduct - how to lead the governing. The concept of conduct points to several meanings; to conduct is to lead or guide, and it also means to conduct oneself (ethical aspect) in a self-directed way in certain situations; our articulated set of behaviours which often are seen as possible to judge in relation to certain norms. All these meanings merge in the concept of governmentality; governing attempts to shape our behaviour according to a particular set of norms and ideas. It is not made through laws. Instead, the rationalities of governing are inscribed into different tactics that are to shape the conduct of the population by working through our desires, aspirations and beliefs (Dean 1999). In other words, there is a continuous creation (and recreation) of the ideas about who the adult learner is and ideas/mentalities of how the governing of this subject is to be practiced. The aim of this study is to problematize the ideas/mentalities of how the adult subject should governed during the 20th century and how these has been reformulated and re-emerged in new linguistic forms.

My historicising of the adult educable subject is inspired by the Foucauldian concept of genealogy. Genealogy is a specific perspective on history and the concept is derived from the Latin word genea, meaning birth (Beronius 1991). This idea has its roots in Foucault's (1977, 1993) view of history. The aim of history is not to try to find causal relations focused on answering questions about why a certain war started or why Swedish adult education emerged. Further, you should not write a linear history from a previous time to a later one. Instead, history is viewed as containing different ruptures and irregularities. Lines of descent and emergence are traced through nonlinear trajectories as a means of questioning the taken-forgranted ideas of present time. As the focus is on the present, this approach has also been called a history of the present (Hultqvist and Petersson 1995, Popkewitz et al 2001). History is seen as 'an understanding of the present and of collective memory as the weaving together of multiple historical configurations that establishes connections that make for the common sense (Popkewitz et al 2001: 4)'. I'm inspried by this definition in my analysis, although the analysis might not be categorized as a complete genealogical analysis. At the centre of attention in this article is the figure of thought called educable. What trajectory does it have and what historical configurations is it a part of?

In this article, I have chosen to make a policy analysis of official documents concerning education/liberal education for adults produced₃during the 20th Century and at the beginning of the 21st century¹. My point of departure is that the adult subject is constructed through the narratives in these documents. In the production of knowledge about the subject, there are ideas/mentalities of how this subject should be governed. Not all the material will be cited in the article due to lack of space, but examples will be presented to support the analysis made.

The overall aim of this article is to show how the planetspeak discourse of lifelong learning is inscribed in specific ways in the case of Sweden and how this local discourse can contribute to the understanding of the planetspeak discourse. The desirable adult subject and the rationalities of governing this subject, as will be argued, are in some aspects specific to Sweden. In the next part I will discuss how the idea of lifelong learner creates a specific educable subject. At the same time, 'the other', those in the need of a remedy, is created. A practice of inclusion and exclusion emerges. In the second part, the idea of the educable subject and the practice of inclusion/exclusion will be mapped in the mid-20th century as a way of discussing how it is inscribed differently. The third part will map these ideas in the 1920s. I will end the article by problematizing some of the results.

Inventing the educable subject as a lifelong learner

Today, an educable subject is constructed in official documents. It is argued that not everyone (the risk groups) is a part of lifelong learning. Study opportunities for these groups have to be created, otherwise they risk being marginalized. They must have the possibility to be compensated for their lack of skills necessary to gain employment and to be part of lifelong learning. The groups at risk are the long-term unemployed, immigrants and people dependent on social security (Ministry of Education 1998, 2004a, b).

With the adult education imitative, the committee intended to strengthen the educational opportunities for adults with the shortest of formal education. There are groups that are at risk of being marginalized and excluded from the labour market because they do not have the prerequisites needed to participate in lifelong learning. It is for them that adult education has to be strengthened and an adult education initiative created (Ministry of Education 1998: 27).

The goal is to make this educable subject employable. The focus of the adult education initiative in 1997-2002 was 'an important part of the government's drive to cut unemployment rates by half (Ministry of Education 1998: 21)'. The normalized adult subject is one that has basic social skills. These are to be acquired through adult education which has as one aim to 'guarantee access to relevant education for individuals, who, because of insufficient basic skills, risk being marginalised in society and being excluded from the labour market (Ministry of Education: 22)'. The social basic skills that are to be developed 'include the capacity to communicate, think critically and creatively and to develop self-criticism and social competencies (Ministry of Education 1998: 18)'. Adult education should also, just as elementary school 'provide opportunities for continuing education and personal development, both in the role as a citizen and in the role as a worker. It should consist of knowledge and creativity, and aptitude to learn new things and handle change (Ministry of Education 1998: 8)'. With such qualities, it should be possible to acquire a job. This means that those who are not part of lifelong learning are to be compensated. They lack these basic social skills and cannot handle change. Therefore, they should participate in adult education.

Further, lifelong learning is presented as something everybody should be a part of, but which is not the case. It is presented as a possibility and something that should be a natural goal for all individuals. The term is formulated as something natural. At the same time, the idea that we learn our entire lives, at all stages and in all contexts, formally, non-formally and informally, is put forward.

Lifelong learning for all has become an increasingly important feature of long-term policy in Sweden. This idea is best understood as a process of individual learning and development throughout a person's entire life, from the cradle to the grave – from learning in early childhood to learning during retirement. It is an all-embracing concept that refers not only to education in formal settings, such as schools, universities and adult educational institutions, but also to the "lifewide" learning in informal environments, both at home and at work (Ministry of Education 1999: 10).

Lifelong learning is put forth as something we do our entire lives. At the same time some people are constructed as not having the prerequisites to participate in lifelong learning. Such a use of language is an expression of the current power relations in the discourse where all is defined as certain groups. First of all, there is a speech about all being included in the lifelong learning. Secondly, only certain groups are included. Thus, all is redefined into meaning specific groups; all is not all in a strict sense. All are those who have the prerequisites to participate in lifelong learning. We could also see this as a liberal technique of governing through the calculation of risk. The adult is to calculate the risks of how participation in lifelong learning lead to a good life or not. Thus, they are encouraged to act in a way to minimize risks of being excluded.

Through this way of speaking everyone is constructed as educable; a construction of a general educableness. Everyone is constructed as being able to participate in adult education. In the first quotation, everyone can be part of lifelong learning if they are supported in their efforts to acquire the competencies to do so. In the last quotation, everyone is constantly learning. Therefore, the educable subject today is combined with the idea of learning as the norm. The will to learn is construed as a mentality of what the adult learner is to become. We are constantly learning (or should be), and are encouraged to do so all the time, which leads us to the idea of the colonisation of life. We should learn our entire lives; otherwise, we risk being marginalized.

Creating 'the other'

The reasoning about the educable subject seems to include an idea of environment. Subjects are not divided into categories of people able to study and not able to study by birth (heritage). Everyone is seen as having the potential to study. But a practice of inclusion and exclusion are in play where 'the other' (Popkewitz 2003) is created. What happens to those who choose not to participate in lifelong learning (adult education) and those who are not successful at it? They become marginalized, just as the text pointed out. Therefore, by creating the normalized adult subject, these texts in themselves produce exclusion; 'the other who is the one focused on by social policies as a way of normalising him/her. We can see how the contradiction of who the adult learner is points to how the existing power relations in society assign a specific meaning to the concept of lifelong learning. By combining lifelong learning with figures such as the labour market and marginalization, a specific 'other' is created. If other figures had been present, other 'others' would have been created. This practice is based on, and constructed through, knowledge produced by social sciences and experts. With population management becoming central in the rationality of government, science has emerged as a means of categorizing and giving expert advice on what is normal/abnormal (Foucault 2003a). One of the most central ways of collecting knowledge is through statistics:

For the evaluation, on the national level, it has been important from the beginning to ensure access to statistics as a basis of, both more short-term follow-ups and more long-term evaluations – a statistic that can be used both for quantitative analysis and as a framework for selection and background material for qualitative studies (Ministry of Education: 247).

Based on such information, governing measures can be taken to create the subjects presented as desirable. It is interesting to note the emphasis on both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of statistics. These are two different ways of producing knowledge seen as central. Further on, we can see how the government sanctions research on issues such as why these people choose not to study (for example, see Paldanius 2002, Ministry of Education 2004b). In this way, educational and sociological research creates 'inequality' that is to be reduced and 'the other' that should be governed to be made part of lifelong learning. There is a desire for truth which has always been present in different discourses; it is one of its productive elements. It acts as a closure system that is renewed and strengthened by institutional support, e.g.

pedagogy, science, etc. (Foucault 1993). In this case, different scientific disciplines are used to create knowledge about the adult subject, such as pedagogy, education, sociology, psychology, statistics, etc.

The enabling state: governing changes - society, future and subject

The subject constructed is related to several figures and techniques, e.g. the idea of the future. Knowledge produced about the subject is placed in relation to visions of the future. 'Lifelong learning for all has become an increasingly important part of long-term policy in Sweden (Ministry of Education: 10).' This implies that the educable subject is part of the future; it is something to be realised. Every rationality of government has a vision of the future. Governing is seen as necessary and possible, as a means of reaching this future; the teleos of government (Dean 1999). In these visions of the future, techniques of governing are inscribed. This can be seen in the talk about lifelong learning where there is also talk about the need for a highly educated population as a means of creating a knowledge-based society that can compete with the rest of the world (Ministry of Education 1998). This has to be done to 'increase growth and maintain welfare and employment (Ministry of Education 1999: 90)'. This implies a threat; if we do not have a highly educated population, Sweden will lag behind. This talk is not only local in character. It can also be seen at the European level and the texts in Sweden refer to them. Referring to the European councils meeting in Lisbon, 2000, it is said that Europe must become the:

the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. At the meeting it was confirmed that the union has taken the step in to the knowledge age, with all it implies for cultural, economic and social life. How we learn, how we live and work – all this is rapidly changing. This not only implies that the individuals have to adapt to changes, but also that established patterns of behaviour have to change (Ministry of Education 2001: 44).

To avoid this threat to the future, there is a need to invest money in adult education so that everyone can be a part of lifelong learning. This ambition is seen as combined with the improved living standards in Sweden and with the scenario of a better future (Ministry of Education 1998). You could say that what we see is governing in the name of the future. By painting scenarios of threats of what can happen if certain measures are not taken, we are governed along the path presented as desirable. We are fabricated as wanting to live in a democratic and highly productive society; no one wants to come in second place. These narratives are projections of the present on the future – someone writes about a future that does not exist, as being natural and as being real. It is written as a fact and some measures will have to be taken to avoid this threat. As will be seen in the 1950s and the 1920s, this way of governing is not new. Instead, the idea of the future has taken on new shapes, and has been filled with different contents.

In the same quotation, we can also see how discourses on the future, society and the subject merge. Society and the future are constantly changing and so are the subjects since they have to adapt to this. This is a vision of the future; something that will be. Such a future cannot be planned. Here, we can see how there is an emphasis placed on the subjects themselves. We all have to adapt to changes, and the established patterns of behaviour have to be changed. This implies that the subjects are their own actors in their own local welfare (Hultqvist *et al* 2003). There is no one to strictly guide you in the world of changes; it is up to you to become flexible and adaptable to these changes. This seems to imply a state not present in the governing practice. Instead, what we see is a neoliberal rationality of government. The state is constructed as 'the enabling state', which should make it possible for subjects to make their own choices and it is in the choices and actions of the subjects themselves that the state is inscribed (Rose 1999a). By enabling the subjects to become autonomous, self-regulated actors responsible for

their own futures, the future can be controlled, but not planned. What is invented is the educable individual who is constantly learning to handle an ever-changing future and by so doing he/she is a co-creator of the future.

Inventing the educable subject as gifted

If we turn our attention to the narratives of the 1950s, we can see how the educable subject is constructed. But there are other discourses present, making the educable subject different from the one today. What is focused on is the gifted/talented subject (Ministry of Education 1952, Fejes 2005).

The individual, who finds a place in life where he best can use his talent and other resources, will achieve a sense of satisfaction. This is also in the interest of society since the individual can then be expected to make a greater effort in his work (Ministry of education 1952: 14).

This quotation constructs a subject with an inner potential that could be developed with support from society. Everyone should end up in a place in society that corresponds to their inner potential. Those who should study are the people with an inner potential that corresponds to the aptitude to study. This leads to the idea of an educable subject. But there is a 'conditional educableness' where some people were seen as having the aptitude to study in adult education. Others did not, and they should do what their inner potential foresaw. This is different from today, when the people who lack the skills to participate in lifelong learning should be supported and educated to be included; a general educableness. This talk during the 1950s was made possible by the idea of heredity. You are divided by birth into a person able to study/not able to study. Consequently, techniques could be developed to measure this potential to see who should study/who should not study. The educable subject should not to be compensated, as is the case today; instead, he/she was encouraged to develop his/her inner heredity potential. This might be the idea of eugenics inscribing itself in the practice of adult education. The desirable subject could be created by manipulating heredity traits. But the idea of heredity runs parallel with recognition of the environment as a 'force' constructing educableness, but not as prominently as today. 'Such qualities as ambition, interest in knowledge and ability to adapt to studying and the study environment cannot be evaluated by the test result (Ministry of education 1952: 23-24).' Therefore, social policy, compared to the idea of eugenics (Selden 2000), could induce some changes in the subject.

Creating 'the other'

What we see is the construction of a practice of inclusion/exclusion, as can be seen during present time. Like today, there is an assumption that an inclusionary practice will be created through adult education. The categorization into gifted and non-gifted subjects was a way for everyone to study no matter what social group they came from, if you were categorized as gifted (Ministry of Education 1952). Further, if you were not gifted, you would still find satisfaction if you chose according to your inner potential. These narratives also create exclusionary practices. Those adults not gifted enough to study are excluded from education. Compared with the present such an exclusionary practice is different; in the 1950s some people should study, others not. There is a distinct outspoken constructed categorization. In the narratives of the present there is no outspoken categorization as everyone is seen as having the potential to learn. You could say that it was possible to combine the ambition of creating inclusion with a clear categorization related to adult education in the mid-20th century. But not today.

This way of creating subjectivity is what Foucault (2003b) calls dividing practices. A procedure that objectifies the subjects; they become objects for knowledge production. At the same time, it contributes to a subjectification process wherein the normal/abnormal is created. What made this practice possible at this time were the sciences. Not foremost sociology and

pedagogy as the case today; instead, it was statistics and psychology that were related to the ambition to govern. These constructed knowledge of who were able to study/not study.

In the mid-1940s, extensive research was carried out on conscripts' abilities/talent and aptitude to study. The results were generalised to apply to the entire population. This kind of research increased in the 1950s and then declined in the 1960s (See Husén 1948, 1956, Härnqvist 1958). The starting point for this research was the notion that all people have a certain intelligence that can be measured. This, combined with extensive tests and evaluations of grades, provided information on how many people in a population should be able to study up to a certain level of education. In this example, research divided humans into gifted/not gifted, and created an idea of the inner potential according to which the subject should choose their path in life. 'The others' were those who did not choose according to this potential. The techniques of governing were to be directed at them. This differs from today when 'the others' were those who do not participate in lifelong learning. Another difference is how statistics are used. Then, the focus was on the quantitative aspects, while today, the focus is on both quantitative and qualitative aspects. This could be seen as a move towards more diverse knowledge production today as a way of handling the constantly changing future.

The distancing state - to plan the future

During this period, the state was constructed as a visible actor in the governing of the adult subject; it was not inscribed in the subjects themselves as is the case today. Those who should study are the gifted ones, and it is a board of exemption (in which the state is inscribed), that decides who are the gifted/not gifted ones (Ministry of Education 1952). This implies a two-sided role for the experts at this time. One was to gather knowledge of who should study/not study, the other was to give advice to the subjects based on this knowledge. This is slightly different from the experts today. Today, the experts give guidance/provide information to the adult subjects as a way for the adults to make their own choices (Fejes 2005).

We could also say that the idea of the gifted one is part of a discourse of the future. This future is constructed similarly to today, but the governing practices are different. In the texts from the 1950s, scenarios of the need of highly educated people to satisfy the labour market are drawn up in the documents. Sweden needed more people to be educated to be able to maintain good living standards. There was especially a need for qualified teachers (Ministry of education 1952). This scenario was drawn up as a threat from the future to the nation. If something were not done, there would be a risk of the positive trend stagnating. By drawing up the threatening scenarios, the desirable future was legitimised and it acted as a technique for creating the desirable subject. At the same time, this idea created that future as one possible to plan. By measuring people's essence it became possible to plan the future through dimensioning adult education according to the number of gifted persons. Thus, threats from within the nation and from the surrounding world could be handled and a prosperous society created.

Parallel with the construction of the 'visible state', there is an idea of the adult making his/her own choices, thus constructing the subject as active. By referring to inner potential and maturity, the subjects are made responsible for governing themselves.

The value for the individual to be able to, as far as possible, freely choose the path of education is a central point of view. Finally, you should be able to count on persons with the experience and maturity mentioned here will not choose an area for which he/she does not have the aptitude (Ministry of Education 1952: 60).

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But at the same time, the subject is constructed as having limits. He/she can only choose within the framework of his/her inner potential. What this example illustrates is that there are no totalising discourses. Instead, there are several ideas in the discourse that are assigned different positions by the current power relations. These different ideas imply that the 'state' seems to be

constructed as being in a process of distancing itself from the governing practice. Through the psychological and statistical research on talent/ability, and its way of speaking, linguistic possibilities were created to govern the subjects at a distance (Rose 1999b). This was one condition of possibility to start speaking of the 'state' as undergoing such a process of distancing itself. Today, this process, as been argued, has continued and taken on a new shape.

Inventing the educable subject as a responsible political citizen

The narratives of the 1920s refer to the idea of the educable subject, everyone can learn something. Liberal adult education is said to create opportunities to:

freely and without constraint gather the broad mass of the people around general civic and cultural interests. The goal is thus a general public feeling of spiritual alertness to the present time's social and cultural mission (Ministry of Education 1924: 197).

What are to be constructed are subjects that are aware of different social issues present in society. The social aspects are accentuated in relation to the new general right to vote which had been introduced in 1919.

This important educational work, for the individual's spiritual development, is, from a social point of view, involves even more responsibility now, with the extended civic rights decided on, as a result of which ever larger groups of citizens need more knowledge of economic and social issues and a more far-reaching social education (Ministry of Education 1924: 6).

The adults should learn about economic and social issues to be able to handle the new future that lay ahead. They had to be able to make good political decisions; to become responsible democratic citizens. Compared with today, we can see how there is a difference in what the subjects should learn. Today, the focus is on basic skills as a way of handling the constantly changing future. At that time, the focus was instead on social issues and social education. But what is similar to today is that the entire population was the target of education: 'The term liberal education means that it targets everyone, irrespective of their previous education and what social class they belong to (Ministry of Education 1924: 9).' This implies a 'general educableness'; everyone was seen as having the possibility to learn. But a difference from today is that there was no construction of learning as a norm; there was no narrative about learning taking place all the time. This also points to an idea about environment. Since you can participate in learning, no matter what your background is, it is possible that the environment (liberal adult education) could produce a change in the subjects. As has been argued, this is also the case today.

Lifelong learning and the improvement of the population

The idea of lifelong learning, that you learn all the time, seems at first glance to be present in these narratives. Even during leisure time, education should have its place. Through study circles a sound and improved leisure time can be created;

Beside the direct impact the study circles have had on the members' acquisition of knowledge, they have also been of great value in that they have contributed to the creation of sound and improved leisure time....Indisputably, these modest entertainment evenings have been of great value, not least in the countryside, as a counterbalance to the uncultivated and dull/vapid leisure life that, sadly often, has been the only entertainment offered to the public (Ministry of Education 1924: 128).

But as can be seen, there is a difference compared with today; it was a non-formalised activity created through liberal adult education compared with the idea of learning as a norm today. There is a focus on institutionalised governing through liberal adult education instead of governing through the choices of individuals, as today. Furthermore, what we can see in this

quotation is the construction of a subject that should be improved. This subject is construed as immature and as being possible to foster. It has uncultivated and dull/vapid leisure time. Through liberal adult education, the subjects can be changed and educated. It is a question of civic education, cultivation of the intellect and the creation of good habits during leisure time. We could say that the population is constructed as an entity that is to be governed and improved; it is a question of the fitness of the population. This could be seen as a way of speaking, making it possible for the emergence of eugenics, which could be seen in Sweden during the first few decades of the 20th century; those not good enough to reproduce were to be sterilised (Runcis 1998, see also Selden 2000 for a parallel with the USA). But in this case, it does not seem to be a question of eugenics, as such an idea refers to the heredity of traits not possible to invoke by means of social reforms based on environment (Selden 2000). Instead, it is a notion of the improvement of the population by invoking change through the environment. What we see is the idea of the population that can be fostered/governed and regulated through liberal adult education and through the idea of the future as being possible to plan. We will turn to the issue of planning the future in the next part.

The social state – to plan the future

The narratives construct a state different from the one today. Instead of an 'enabling state', we can see the emergence of the 'social state'. This can be seen in the language used in the quotation above where the adults should learn about social issues. Another example is the focus on attaining official hygiene (Ministry of Education 1924), a word made possible through the emergence of the social sciences. One practice where this took place was in the library with its task of judging how a book influences the person reading it. Literature that treats

Socially detrimental and unethical sexual relationships of a sort that from an ethical point of view could be bad, if they are placed in the hands of young and immature readers, should not, either by lending or in other ways, be accessible to persons who are not regarded as having reached the required maturity (Ministry of Education 1924: 25).

In this quotation, there is a construction of someone bringing up someone else. In this case, it is the 'State', which, by regulating what literature is to be available, sees to it that no 'wrong' books fall into the hands of the immature. The representative in the premises who has to ensure that this is followed is the librarian (Ministry of Education 1924). This person has to make judgements of who is not mature enough to read certain books. In this way, the librarian is a co-creator of the immature, educable subject; he/she is the expert who collects information on what is being read, and contributes to the governing of the subject. This idea of the state as a mode of governing through 'the social' can also be seen in the following quotation:

It is, of course, also of great significance that a really comprehensive and thorough investigation is made with the aim of determining what the state can and should do to further develop the liberal adult education intended for adult citizens, so that it truly takes its place in the national fostering organisation (Ministry of education: 6).

By means of institutional support of liberal adult education, a framework of governing is created; governing is in the process of being institutionalised. We could say that society is constructed as being possible to plan, which made it possible for a 'visible' state to emerge. The state was constructed as the one planning the future, and in the practice of adult education, in co-operation with the popular movement. This is a difference compared with today, when the future is seen as ever changing. Such a future cannot be planned and therefore the state is instead inscribed in the actions of the subjects; those who will handle this ever-changing future. This idea of the future as being possible to plan was accentuated in the 1930s when the welfare state was beginning to emerge with its ideas of social engineering, etc. (Hirdman 2000), and it

could also be seen in the material analysed from the 1950s. In the words of Olsson and Petersson (2005), there were no distinction made at this time in Sweden between the state and society. Shaping the future was a collective affair and the individual should conform to the common standards of welfare.

A main point here is that 'the social' is ascribed a central role in this narrative. The discourse finds its linguistic foundation through the social sciences; e.g. social hygiene. 'The experts share the opinion expressed in the above quote, that a certain degree of official hygiene is necessary even in the spiritual area (Ministry of education 1924: 25).' The use of a 'social' language makes it possible to construct a social state (Rose 1999a). Problematizing governing in terms of 'the social' made it possible to speak of a future that could be planned.

Governing the politically irresponsible subjects – creating 'the other'

As has been said, all humans seem to be constructed as educable, and the entire population was the target of liberal adult education. But the entire population is through the present power relations in the discourse defined as some specific groups; those who have not reached the 'correct' cultural level. A practice of inclusion/exclusion is constructed. These groups need to be properly educated and thereby saved from 'passions' and uncivilized lives. Otherwise, they are at risk of being marginalised (not able to handle their rights as citizens). What is proper is decided by the state and by the liberal adult education institutions. Sciences are constructed as an important part of liberal adult education, and therefore as a part of the construction of the adult learner.

As it is vital for our liberal adult education that the scientists as often as possible take part in it, it is, according to the experts, particularly desirable that the central agencies for the mediation of the lectures is organized as closely as possible to the universities (Ministry of Education: 101).

The close relationship with the universities is supported by the idea that liberal adult education has to be in 'contact with modern scientific knowledge (Ministry of Education 1924: 7)'. The lecturers should elaborate on the issue at hand in an objective way, as part of the development of a citizen engaged in self-studies (Ministry of Education 1924). The scientists are constructed as experts who are taking part in the governing of the adult subjects to become democratic and politically responsible citizens.

This division into the normal responsible citizen and the irresponsible citizen was merging with the idea of the future, as it is today, but in a different way. The international character of the threats today did not exist at that time. There was no 'external' world that Sweden had to be compared with. Instead, the focus was on domestic threats, as was mainly the case in the mid-20th century. However, it was not related to the labour market. Instead, society would be threatened if the common people did not get educated about their civic rights in a correct way. There was a risk of them only becoming superficially educated, which was dangerous for society. Superficial education would happen if the student only scratched the surface of a subject matter. Therefore, a lecture had to include literature references so that the person could continue to educate him/herself (Ministry of Education 1924). This regulation of literature in itself acted as a technique for governing the lecturers; their actions were both a result of a governing practice and a governing practice in itself.

The condition of literature instructions, accompanying lectures, should be one of the conditions for acquiring state funding of any lecture activity. An educational activity that only results in invoking interest for a certain subject matter, without the opportunity for a deeper study of this subject, will lead to shallowness and superficial education (Ministry of Education: 79).

By suggesting 'good' books for the lectures, the adult was given the opportunity to study in greater depth, and thus acquire the correct education. A shallow education seemed to be dangerous for the individual and society because the consequence could be irresponsible

political action. 'The other' is constructed as the one not being able to make responsible political decisions. In other words, superficial education acts as a technique for governing the subjects so that they become educated people who can make responsible political decisions. This idea can be related to the idea of the adult subject becoming self-governed. 'One of the founding principles of the free educational efforts should be that it leads to self-activity (Ministry of Education 1924: 120).' The subjects should be inspired by the lectures and then start to study by themselves and together with friends in study circles. This idea points to a governing practice where there is an idea of the self-responsibility and self-governing of the individual combined with specific measures taken by experts (with support of social sciences). The social administration of the population was to be carried out by creating active selfresponsible citizens involved in liberal adult education. This sounds similar to today, but the main differences are that during the early 20th century, life was seen as being possible to plan and that this would be done by the state/civil society, its representatives and the individuals themselves as a means of attaining a stable society; governing through society. Today, the future is not seen as possible to plan and governing is instead carried out through the choices of the each and every individual.

Conclusions

In this article, it has been argued that new ways of governing the adult learner have taken shape over the last eighty years in Sweden. There has been a shift from governing through society to governing through the actions of the individuals. In this shift, the idea of the adult educable subject has travelled and been constituted in different ways. In the 1920s, this subject was one who had the potential to learn, and should learn about social and economic issues to be able to make good political decisions. The aim was to create a democratic and responsible citizen. In the 1950s, the educable subject was, instead, one who was created as gifted. These persons were to be educated to keep Sweden as a welfare state. Everyone, not only the gifted, should choose according to their inner potential as a means of creating a good future. Today, the educable subject is instead one who is constantly learning as a way to meet the ever-changing future. If not everyone becomes part of lifelong learning, there is a risk that Sweden will not keep up with the rest of the world. Today, the educable subject is being created as a lifelong learner.

The planetspeak discourse (Nóvoa 2002) of lifelong learning has been inscribed in Sweden as a 'truth' and a remedy to keep Sweden as a welfare state in the forefront of the world. It is not possible to question this idea; those who do are created as 'the others' who are in need of a remedy. In this article, it has been argued that this discourse is inscribed in the practice of adult education today in Sweden, at the same time as learning is also inscribed in leisure time, time at work, etc; learning as a norm. The spread of lifelong learning in Sweden and its normalising practice of learning are therefore not only tied to the practice of schooling. As Olsson and Petersson (2005) put it, this discourse can be seen as inscribing itself in society as a whole; society is construed as a learning society. The notion of 'school as Society' has turned into 'Society as a school'. In such a society, as been argued in this article, the educable subject is a necessary construct. If you are to learn you have to be educable. Adult education is constructed as a crucial part of making this society a reality. Those who do not have the competencies to be part of lifelong learning will acquire them in adult education. If everyone is constantly learning, the teleos of government can be achieved in Sweden; a vision of the 'good' future the welfare state. This vision acts as a technique for creating this future and the educable adult subject. Such a discourse on the welfare state is local in character. In, for example, the US the welfare state is also used as a technique for creating a good future, but in an opposite way. It is presented as a negative vision of the future, a risk that has to be avoided if the good future is to be reached (Canella 2003).

As the educable subject is constructed so is 'the other' constructed; the ones who are the focus of different techniques of governing as a means of being normalised. As has been argued,

the other in the 1920s consisted of those who were unable to make good political decisions. Therefore they needed to attend liberal adult education. Through participation in such activities, the adults were prepared to make good political decisions by attending lectures, reading the 'correct' books and starting self-studies. By doing so, an active subject was constructed as a way of attaining a stable society. In the mid-20th century, 'the other' was the ones not choosing according to their inner potential and those not gifted enough to study. They were to be evaluated to see what potential they had as a way of making them make the correct decisions. But they had to make the choices by themselves, thereby creating active subject making their own choices. This can be seen as a neoliberal mode of governing where governing is carried out through the choices of the individuals themselves. Such a way of governing seems to have been made possible earlier in Sweden than is ascribed to the political rhetoric of neo-liberalism (Rose 1999a). Today, 'the others' are those who do not participate in lifelong learning. They need to be focused on by adult education through which they can acquire the prerequisites of becoming part of lifelong learning.

What is similar in all these narratives during the 20th century is that they all create a practice of inclusion and exclusion. The ambition has always been to include everyone; in the 1920s, everyone was to be included in society and have the competence to make good political choices. In the 1950s, everyone was to choose according to his/her potential, which meant that social class did not stand in the way of education, and today everyone should be part of lifelong learning. But what this article has argued is that the power/knowledge relation in motion in the creation of inclusion also has exclusion as one of its effects. Not all people will make good political decisions, not all people will choose according to their potential, not all people will participate in lifelong learning. Therefore, one needs to question the narratives of lifelong learning and try to understand what kinds of subjects are intended as the product, and what kinds of exclusionary practices this creates. How can lifelong learning be rephrased as a way of avoiding exclusionary practices? Is such a narrative possible?

The aim of the study is not to tell a story of how it 'really was'. Instead, it has been an attempt to show how ideas travel through time and space, change their contours, disappear out into the 'wilderness' and are re-inscribed anew. This is a critical task insofar as it tries to show how the taken-for-granted ideas of today are not the only way to reason about who the adult learner should become, how to create this subject, etc. Hopefully it can be a starting point for discussions on the present day adult education and the adult learner. As Nikolas Rose argues, the aim of historicising the present time is to introduce:

a critical attitude towards those things that are given to our present experience as if they were timeless, natural, unquestionable: to stand against the maxims of one's time, against the spirit of one's age, against the current of received wisdom (Rose 1999a: 20).

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Notes

1. Ministry of Education 1924, 1948, 1952, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004a, 2004b

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