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This is the published version of a chapter published in *Inspirational Women in Europe: Making a difference in Physical Education, Sport and Dance*.

Citation for the original published chapter:

Lundvall, S., Meckbach, J., Redelius, K., Mattsson, T. (2016)

Some early and later female pioneers in physical education, dance and sports in Sweden: three different portraits.

In: Rosa Diketmüller (ed.), *Inspirational Women in Europe: Making a difference in Physical Education, Sport and Dance* (pp. 86-124). Juiz de Fora: NGIME/UFJF

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published chapter.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:gih:diva-4438>

Some early and later female pioneers in physical education, dance and sports in Sweden: three different portraits

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Introduction

According to the latest *Gender Gap Report* by the World Economic Forum, Sweden is one of the most equal countries in the world (www.weforum.org). The equality is described by for example the proportion of women working outside the home and their economical distribution. The Swedish parliament has also one of the world's highest representation numbers of women parliament members. To be able to understand this development of equality, factors like a long period with a social democracy government and a strong popular movement are often put forward as explanations for the Swedish gender policy development. But an unproven hypothesis is also that the early education of both men and women in bodily exercise and physical activity played a role in this development.

The purpose of this chapter is to pay attention to three Swedish women who, through their engagement in physical culture and sports in different time periods, made difference to the lives of girls and women. The first pioneer, Martina Bergman-Österberg, established a female Physical Education Teaching Training Program (PETE), the second, Ann Elefalk, broke the way for female coaches in a male dominated sport and the third Cecilia Dahlgren brought dance into compulsory schools in Sweden. The three portraits differ, but together they illustrate how education, passion and strategies can move mountains.



Martina Bergman-Österberg – an entrepreneur of physical education for girls and women

In many ways the early establishment of female participation in the field of physical culture broadened the cultural space of what could be of legitimate value in relation to existent gender order and division. The first pioneer to be described is Martina Bergman (married Österberg) (1849-1915). In the late 1800s she graduated as a physical educator from the former Royal Central Gymnastic Institute (GCI), today named the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences (GIH). The institute, founded in 1813, was and is still one of the first physical education teacher training institutes in the world. The studying program at the institute rested on the ideas of Per Henrik Ling, who had developed a bodily exercise system called the Ling gymnastics (the Swedish gymnastics), where bodily exercise for military, medical, and pedagogical and aesthetical aims could be studied. Though the fourth branch, the aesthetical gymnastics, whereby feelings and emotions could be expressed, was never developed by Ling himself. Instead women's later engagement in dance and rhythmic developed aesthetical and rhythmic gymnastics (see for example LUNDVALL; MECKBACH, 2003).

From the very beginning the female body was included in Ling's theory of bodily exercise (LING, 1840). His thinking was based on certain ideas about practicing movements and training the body, tightly linked to ethical and aesthetic ideals and to perspectives of health regarded as wholeness, expressed through balance and symmetry. The civic virtues, strongly present in intellectual circles at that point of time, could, according to Ling, be enhanced by practicing gymnastics (LJUNGGREN, 2013).

Female students were officially admitted as students from 1864 onwards, and the number of female students rose gradually from a handful to class size. In 1891 there were 132 applications and 27 were accepted. The early female students studied medical (remedial) and pedagogical gymnastics.



Course at GCI, 1891-1893

In 1887 female students were officially allowed to take on jobs as remedial gymnasts and also got the right to use the official title of an accredited professional PE educator; "director of gymnastics"³.

Hence, in the late 1800s Bergman-Österberg was surrounded by a growing culture that supported women's engagement in public life. What makes Bergman-Österberg interesting to highlight, is her commitment to use bodily exercise (Ling gymnastics) as a way of developing identity, health and physicality, but also as way of preparing for a life outside the private sphere. Bergman-Österberg seems to have been strongly convinced from the start that a thorough education and preparation for professional life could make a difference and was essential if women were to succeed outside the home. For Bergman-Österberg and her later counterparts in Sweden, there was only one alternative to choose and that was to strategically build an educational platform to secure women's possibilities to be in charge of their own lives⁴. Bergman-Österberg, and several other leading ladies within the field of physical culture did not rely on male colleagues to get their reformation

³ The title 'director of gymnastics' was common in Sweden until 1977, then changed to 'teacher of gymnastics' between 1978-1982, and changed again to 'teacher in sports' (idrottslärare) between 1983-2011. Today the title for a graduate in physical education is 'teacher in sport and health'. Often this person has at least one more school subject in his or her teaching exam.

⁴ In Sweden female PE educators did not break out from the existing institutions which educated PE educators, instead they founded an association on their own in 1902, the Association of GCI. The purpose of the association was to secure jobs and working conditions, as well as the level of knowledge through courses and seminars (FÖRENINGEN, 1902; see also Lundvall forthcoming).

ideas implemented – on the contrary they chose to take on the "leading quarter" themselves. But, what inspired the early female PE educators to act the way they did?

Two important sources for the understanding of the 'footprints' of the early pioneers' in the field of physical culture in Sweden are the dissertation *The making and breaking of a female PE culture: the her story* by Barbro Carli and the book, *Vandringsboken*, a collection of letters between early examined female PE educators by Olle Halldén. For the understanding of how Bergman-Österberg established the first college for female PE educators, Sheila Fletcher's book *Women First*, has been important, along with publications from other sports historian (see for example HARGREAVES, 1994; PFISTER, 1998, 2003; TRÆENGBÆK, 1998; VERTINSKY, 1999). What these sources reveal are women dedicated to make a difference in the field of bodily exercise for girls and women. For Bergman-Österberg, to make a difference also included to have a solid and strategic base to act from, which could enable her commitment in public life and, as was shown later, also meant involvement in the early women's liberation movement.

A farmer's daughter becoming an entrepreneur

Matilda Bergman (married Österberg) was born in to a farmer family with four daughters and two sons. Her father is said to have encouraged education. She got a high school degree as a private student, and left Sweden to study language and gymnastics abroad. At the age of 30 (!) she applied for studies in remedial and pedagogical gymnastics and got accepted as a student at the GCI in 1879. After her PETE examination she got the appointment as school inspector in London, with the mission to introduce Swedish Ling gymnastics. For six years she worked as a school inspector and educated over 700 female teachers in gymnastics for elementary schools. The development of gymnastics for girls in London schools was impressive compared to schools in Sweden at that time. During her inspection visits, it is told that she was keen on paying attention to deficits in the school environment, health and ergonomics (WICKSELL, 1915). But Bergman-Österberg was not satisfied with only introducing school gymnastics. Quite early she realized that to

be able to make a difference she also had to include an establishment of a professional education for female PE educators. This was also an important step to take in order to reach the English middle and upper class. The excerpt below illustrates that she was troubled over how to reach these layers of society.

Is it not rather funny that you here in England think what is good for the poor cannot be good for the rich? By that time I found that I had completed my task; the teachers I had trained would train others, and my work received many flattering remarks of approval. But the system had been identified with that of the poor; that was difficulty. Because it was good education for the poor it could not possibly be the same for the rich. However this argument did not impede me for long. I built the College and Gymnasium in 1885, and since then have been steadily working to improve the physical development of women in the middle and upper classes (FEHN, 2000, p. 130).

Her strategy from the beginning regarding the acceptance of her idea to establish an educational field for women from the middle and upper class was to introduce and display the Swedish Ling gymnastics together with outdoor plays at international congresses. By this she could communicate the detrimental influence of long studying hours on posture and bodily strength, and the need for invigoration through physical exercise. Included in her communication was that there was a need for a "specialist", an educated, trained person that could take care of the training of the body of girls. And this had to be done by educated and trained female teachers. In Bergman-Österberg's view, the unscientific training of calisthenics had to be replaced by Ling gymnastics.

In 1885 she started the first English physical teacher training college for women, *The Hampstead Physical Teaching Training College and Gymnasium*, northwest of London. The educational courses went on for two years and the content resembled that of the GCI institute, and included both remedial and pedagogical gymnastics. To create an air of distinction and status, she kept the number of students low and had certain admission

tests to secure that the students who entered had the qualities Bergman-Österberg was looking for. Her students had to give England what it needed: healthy and capable girls and women (HARGREAVES, 1994; WICKSELL, 1915). In written obituaries about Bergman-Österberg's life her capacity is praised and her personality described as formed by power of action and great commitment (WICKSELL, 1915; WIDEBECK, 1915;).

After a decade in Hampstead, Bergman-Österberg bought a mansion in Kingsfield, Dartford Heath in Kent, south of London. Here she had space to further develop her teacher training college with the practice of remedial gymnastics.



Students from GCI playing cricket at Dartford College in 1954 (photographer unknown)

In the park she constructed biking lanes, play grounds for lawn tennis, lacrosse and cricket, everything in the spirit of merging Swedish gymnastics and English outdoor plays. Dance and swimming were regularly part of the education.

The institute took on the name *Bergman-Österberg Physical Training College*, and became an important part of everyday life in Dartford, where children could learn to swim, practice gymnastics and games, but also where people could get remedial gymnastics as part of rehabilitation training.

Bergman-Österberg was an entrepreneur, who in the light of today emerged in several ways. She had a good eye for the English class system and made use of this in order to reach her goal of educating middle and upper class women and prepare them for a professional role in society. But she was also receptive to current changes and knew instinctively that novelty was an important trait to use to be in front. According to several references after a studying trip to the United States she brought basketball to England and transformed it in a creative way into net ball, a new ball game for girls and women (JOBLIN; BARHAM, 1991). Furthermore she engaged in the dressing of women when practicing bodily exercise, and encouraged the development of the gym slip (www.tes.co.uk).

A character of demand

Bergman-Österberg is often described as bossy and demanding. She could criticize brutally and harshly, but still seems to have been loved and respected. The nick name Napoleon is used in some texts about Bergman-Österberg (WIDEBECK, 1915). She called her students "my English flowers". When Bergman-Österberg spoke about capability, she thought about character, self-confidence and self-awareness:

No student of mine ever says "I cannot" The day will come when you feel nervous.
Remember you are one of Madame Österberg's students and it will be enough to
carry you through any situation (FEHN, 2000, p. 132).

After Dartford College other educational institutes were founded and several of them were established by Bergman-Österberg's former students, within England and abroad (CARLI, 2004; FEHN, 2000; FLETCHER, 1984). Some of her former students also started a labor union (1899). They named the association *The Ling Physical Education Association* and invited Bergman-Österberg to become its chairmen. This initiative upsets Bergman-Österberg. Instead she established her own association in the following year (1900); *The Bergman-Österberg Union*. And it was not until after her death that both associations melted together and became at first *The Ling Association and Affiliated Gymnastics*

Societies – and later the *Physical Education Association of the United Kingdom* (www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martina_Bergman).

After Bergman-Österberg withdrew as head of the college in 1913, she started to plan for how her lifework could be continued. In letters sent back home she expressed hopes that the English state in some way would accept her college as a gift and carry on with the management of the college. This was the case. From mid 1970s the institute was taken over by the *Thames Polytechnic*, and later by the *University of Greenwich* (www.tes.co.uk).

The life work of Bergman-Österberg needs to be seen both in the light of her time and in the light of actually being implemented in a country which often is labeled as "the cradle of sports". Bergman-Österberg was in her time seen as the: "the morning star of reformation" and as an agent for a new understanding of health (FLETCHER, 1984). That Bergman-Österberg has played a decisive role in the spread of the Swedish gymnastics system abroad and school PE is without doubt, but that she also seems to have been close to the women's liberation movement is less known in the field of PE and sports.

Women's liberation movement

Bergman-Österberg was active in a time when women started to gather in gender separate associations to improve and strengthen human rights and legal causes like the right for women to vote, to work outside the home and make a living. In England suffragettes like the sisters Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, were active, and in Sweden Bergman-Österberg's cousin Signe Bergman was active within the Swedish suffragette movement. Facts around how and in which way Bergman-Österberg herself participated still needs to be explored. What is known is that Signe stayed in England with Bergman-Österberg for a couple of years.

In line with this, it is perhaps not surprising that Bergman-Österberg just before she passed away in 1915, bought a big mansion called *Apelryd* in Båstad, in the south of

Sweden and converted this place to a school for the education of gardening and home economics for girls and women (the first gardener school in the Nordic countries to be established). This was all in line with her wish to secure educational possibilities for women and her approach of how to best contribute to women's preparedness for public life. Last year this school, *the Apelrydska* celebrated its 100th anniversary, still holding courses, if not in gardening but in economics of today, design, leader- and entrepreneurship. At her deathbed Bergman-Österberg donated an impressive amount of money to the Fredrika-Bremer-Association. The Apelryd school is under the management of the Fredrika-Bremer-Association (see <http://www.apelryd.se/hem.html> and <http://www.fredrikabremer.se>).

The more personal parts of Bergman-Österberg's life are quite unknown. She married Edvin Österberg in 1885, a school principal working in Stockholm. Throughout life they kept on living separately but married. Edvin was a regular visitor to the Hampstead and Dartford colleges though. A cause for his visits was also that he served as a private teacher for the British born crown princess Margareta of Sweden. Accordingly, Bergman-Österberg seems to have been able to both keep up her marriage and continue to be committed to her working life. In that sense she was "ahead" of her time.

Official tributes

Martina Bergman-Österberg was the first to become honorary member in the *National Association for the Political Right of Female Voting* (Landsföreningen för Kvinnors politiska rösträtt (L.K.P.R.) (FEHN, 2000), and the sign London Remembers can be found at the address NW6, Broadhurst Gardens 1, South Hampstead in London. The wordings are: Martina Bergman-Österberg, 1849-1915, Pioneer of Physical Education for Women lived and worked here (see <http://www.londonremembers.com/memorials/martina-osterberg>). Bergman-Österberg was given the medal *Litteris et Artibus* in 1906, a decoration given to persons that have made Sweden known and honored in the world (See www.kungahuset.se).

This part of the article has focused on one of the early Swedish pioneers in the field of physical culture leaving her footprints in both Sweden and England. Bergman-Österberg should be paid attention to and remembered not only for what she established, but perhaps even more so for the strategic and discerning way in which she was able to implement her ideas.

Ann Elefalk – a pioneer who paved the way for women's sport in Sweden

Karin Redelius

This is a personal story about Ann Elefalk, a woman who paved the way for thousands of girls and women who, like me, loved the game of bandy. Ann was one of the first administrators ever who was employed by a sport federation to promote women's sport in Sweden. Today almost as many girls as boys are participating in organized sports in Sweden, but that was certainly not the case in the late 1960s when Ann became engaged in bandy. She did a fantastic job spreading the sport and she worked hard to improve the conditions for women playing. Ann also played bandy herself and for many years she was coaching the best team in Sweden at the time. I know, because I was on the team and her love for the game of bandy was contagious, just as her passionate work for the right of girls and women to do any sport they want (especially bandy).

You probably do not know much, if anything, about bandy, the sport she was promoting. So let me start by telling you that bandy is sometimes called “football of the winter”. The reason for that is of course that the game has many similarities with football (soccer): the size of the field, the number of players and many of the rules are the same, but it also has many differences. Bandy is played on ice, the players have skates and a stick (almost like the ones used in field hockey) and the ball has the size of a tennis ball but it is much harder. The game is not as tough as ice-hockey since the players are not allowed to tackle and therefore they do not need as much protection as in ice hockey.

Bandy is mainly played in Russia and the Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland) but lately it has spread to North America and to Asia. It is a fantastic game to play. There is such a large ice area to skate and develop speed, so it is very fast. Sometimes those on the side watching bandy find it hard to see the ball because everything happens so fast, especially on TV when one cannot see the whole rink.

While searching for background information about Ann Elefalk I browsed through a book with the title "Bandy for 100 years" (ARGUS, 2002) The book has 304 pages and 298 of those are devoted to men's bandy, and that gives a hint about the situation Ann had to face. The book was published in 2002, the year that mark the 100th anniversary of organized bandy competitions in Sweden. A hundred final games have been played to appoint a Swedish champion of the men's teams. But bandy for women has a long history as well, and the headline on the first of the six pages that deal with women's bandy in the book reads: "Women's bandy for a hundred years as well".



Women playing bandy at the Olympic stadium in Stockholm 1912. Photo: A. Swinhufvud

Already around the turn of the century in the late 1800s there were all ladies teams that played on the frozen lakes around the Stockholm area. In 1915 the organization improved and there were teams in several cities around Sweden.

However, it was not until Ann Elefalk was employed by the Swedish Bandy Federation some fifty years later and started working in a systematic way to organize women's bandy, that the first bandy league for women was formed. The first and much awaited Swedish championship came about in 1973. I turned 12 the same year and I loved to skate and playing ice hockey was my greatest passion. I played on a boys' team and I had number nine on my team shirt just like Bobby Hull, my favorite player and an NHL-star in the 1970s. I was the only girl on the team and once when we played a tournament that fact made the news. "Woman participated in ice hockey tournament" was what the headline said and that 'woman' was a ten year old girl. One day when I came home after a game I was very sad. My parents got worried. This was at a time when children went to practices and matches by themselves (I rode my bike everywhere) and parents normally did not watch more than perhaps a game or two during the whole season. "How was it today, didn't you have fun?" my mom asked when she saw the sorrow on my face. "It was fun", I said, "we won and I scored twice, but I am not allowed to play anymore". For some reason that I still do not know, my coach told me that I (a girl) could not be on the team any longer. I was devastated. Later on my mom told me that was the moment when I became a feminist (although I did not know it at the time). So what should I do now?

A couple of years earlier I had a PE teacher, a young woman in her twenties who substituted for my ordinary teacher. I know she had played bandy and I thought that if she, who was almost a grown up woman was allowed to play, maybe I could as well. I did not recall the name of her club so I called Stockholm Bandy Federation and asked if they knew a club where girls were allowed to play bandy. They did, and I started to play bandy as a thirteen year old girl and I got Ann as a coach. Bandy soon became my favorite sport and I continued playing for more than twenty years. I also became a leader in bandy and for a long time I was the chairman for the board of my bandy club. Later on I was the chair for the ladies bandy committee of the Swedish Bandy Federation, and finally I was a member of the board of the Swedish Sports Confederation. But my journey was much easier than the one Ann had. In many respects she paved the way for me and many other girls and women. What did she accomplish?

As already mentioned she worked hard to establish a championship for women. Once that was up and running she set a new goal: to form a national team and eventually ensure that women were given the chance to play international matches against other nations. Her dream was that one day a world championship in bandy for women would be arranged. The most difficult thing for Ann was not to get girls and women interested in the game, but to make men in bandy federations and clubs understand that women should also have the chance to play. She worked for the national federation for over twenty years and she had to fight for a long time and in many different ways against stubbornness, inequalities and prejudice. She was extraordinarily persistent and she never gave up. In 1980 the first international game was played and today women have their own world championship in bandy.

In the first doctoral thesis ever about women's sport in Sweden Eva Olofsson describes how different sports for women were eventually accepted in their respective federations (OLOFSSON, 1989). The modern Swedish sports movement was dominated by men throughout its development in the 19th century. Olofsson states that sport is an activity created for men by men. The establishment of soccer and bandy happened during the same time period in the 1960s and 1970s and Olofsson points out that the conditions of women in sport are closely connected with the development of society as a whole as well as with women's general conditions in society. In comparison with women's history in general, women's history in sports has undergone a similar development but with an obvious time lag. The time was ripe when Ann Elefalk started working to improve the chances for girls and woman to play bandy. This does not mean that the work was easy; it was tremendously difficult. Thanks to her effort and her love and passion for the game she was successful in making people (men) understand that bandy should be more inclusive and to let girls and women just as boys and men discover the thrill of bandy. All the women and girls that take their participation in sports for granted have a lot to be grateful for. Thank you Ann for making a difference for women who want to play bandy!

Dance at schools for all Cecilia Björklund Dahlgren – an enthusiast and inspirer



Björklund Dahlgren

It took an enthusiast and an inspirer to spread dance in the Swedish compulsory school. Cecilia Björklund Dahlgren (born in 1954) has worked to promote dance for all children in compulsory schools for the last 30 years. The Swedish curriculum states that the school has a responsibility for aesthetic learning processes. This also includes letting pupils encounter dance in an educational context.

Pupils should have the opportunity of experiencing knowledge in different ways. They should also be encouraged to try out and develop different modes of expression and experience feelings and moods. Drama, rhythm, dance, music and creativity in art, writing and design should all form part of the school's activity. Harmonious development and educational activity provide opportunities for exploring, researching, acquiring and communicating different forms of knowledge and experiences. A creative ability is a part of what pupils should acquire (NATIONAL AGENCY FOR EDUCATION, 2011, p. 12).

The question is how to make this happen and who should teach dance? Cecilia's mother, Eva Dahlgren, was a kind of role model for Cecilia as she worked with the idea of spreading dance early on. She was convinced that all children should be entitled to

dance. Eva Dahlgren developed dance in the 1960s and 1970s in Västerbotten in the northern parts of Sweden. Furthermore, she founded *Boliden Children Ballet*, which had a major impact on the spreading of dance in Sweden (Dahlgren, 2006). This resulted in opportunities for many children to learn and experience dance. Cecilia participated in the children's ballet, then she taught dance and later continued to build on the lifework of her mother. This text is about her pioneer work and her wish to spread dance as a field of knowledge in schools and society.

Dance as a means of expression

Cecilia has worked to strengthen dance as a means of expression in a variety of ways. The focus has been on artistic dance and Cecilia sees dance as a language and a sensual way of being creative with the body. It is essential that children can experience the perceptual knowledge which exists within dance, that is the ability to perceive and experience reality with the mind and be able to say something - shape with their movements and even dare to enjoy their body (BJÖRKLUND DAHLGREN, 2012, p. 162).

To Cecilia, dance is something special that is genuine and playful. She believes that dance can contribute to children's development, and this belief has pushed her to continue the fight for dance over the years. Indeed there has been resistance. Music and art have long existed as mandatory subjects in the Swedish elementary school. Theater and music have a nationwide spreading through institutions like the national theater and music schools. However, dance has never been granted that kind of position, neither at school nor in society. According to Cecilia, dance has historically been regarded as an urban phenomenon and something exclusive. Hence, this is something she has been dedicated to counteract and change. Her goal is that all children should be granted the possibility to dance at school and that also people in the countryside should be able to watch different dance performances.

Structures to succeed

Cecilia worked as a dance teacher in the middle of the 1980s in the county of Enköping, outside of Stockholm. She had a low position in the school system, a consequence of the lack of regulative agreements for dance teachers at that time. She was young, had a lot of energy and managed to get 21 schools in the county to start teaching dance. Suddenly she got more attention, and many municipalities showed interest in teaching and learning dance. She realized that a personal interest in dance is not enough, and that there must be state funding and investments if the wide spread of dance should become a reality. Because of this, she contacted the former cultural – and educational minister in Sweden, Bengt Göransson, who paid her cause attention and gave her an employment at the Swedish Arts Council. However, it would take another ten years before dance was introduced as an independent area of art within the national cultural politics. Some years earlier in 1992, Cecilia had been the initiator of a model in spreading dance based on hired dance consultants with herself as a state dance consultant. This structure with regional dance consultants became a success in terms of the spread of dance and dance could be promoted in different geographical regions. This structure still exists in Sweden.

Cecilia Björklund Dahlgren is of the opinion that dance must be promoted all over the nation to reach the goal to entitle all children the right to dance. Due to her position within the Swedish Arts Council an organizational frame for dance developed. And by this she could approach municipalities, politicians, sponsors, associations and parents in order to promote dance.

Create meeting places for dance

One important task for Cecilia Björklund Dahlgren has been to create meeting places for dance. In 2006 she also started the program *Dance in school*. Cecilia had constructed a door opener, an entrance for dance at school, with the help of a school

reform stating that every child should have the opportunity for daily physical activity at school. The specific goal with *Dance in school* was to make dance accessible to all children as an educational subject and to promote learning through dance. A national survey was conducted and different networks for dance were formed in teacher training programs at university level. *Dance in school* further enabled various dance projects and appointments for dance educators in schools. In 2007 the first *Dansbiennalen* took place at the Royal Opera in Stockholm. The purpose was to create a forum for dance teachers, dance artists, scientists, teachers, principals, businesses and policy-makers. Since then the *Dansbiennalen* has been held in different places every second year.

In 2003 Cecilia started the first education in Sweden for dance teachers at Luleå Technology University. The placement in the north of Sweden was strategic. The dance profile is still operative and the future dance teachers are doing their teaching training in different municipalities, which enables them to meet children in several schools nationwide.

Kiruna municipality – dance at school for all



Dancing children in traditional Lapp clothes Photo by Hans-Olof Utsi

Cecilia constantly repeats the importance of getting all children to experience dance at school. A school is the institution in which dance should be strengthened, both through development of methods and science. Several municipalities have made certain efforts to provide dance at school. However, Kiruna at the very north of Sweden is particularly dear to Cecilia. In Kiruna, a great geographical distance separates schools and the School board decided to offer dance to all children. Cecilia was to assist in this task in 2010. She wrote applications and was granted financial means from the Cultural counsel, LKAB (a mining company) and Kiruna municipality. By decisively establishing the idea in all schools a common will to succeed was created.

Cecilia also started further educational courses in dance for teachers and other personnel at all schools in Kiruna municipality. Cecilia stresses that the knowledge of dance among ordinary teachers is important, but that this can never replace a dance teacher with several years of education. According to Cecilia, the best solution would be a cooperation e.g. between PE teachers and dance teachers at school.

It takes an enthusiast and an inspirer to spread dance at school the way Cecilia Björklund Dahlgren has done and still is doing. Her passion for dance and her conviction that all children have the right to try dancing pushes her to continue. Dance education is important and there is a need for educated cultural dance teachers who can give children an entrance to cultural values in society.

Long time passed before dance was introduced as an art form in the Swedish educational system but now the interest is growing for dance. It takes an extensive cooperation between all actors in order to reach the goal of DANCE IN SCHOOL FOR ALL! The experiences that are given in dance are essential and cannot be reached in any other way than by dancing (BJÖRKLUND DAHLGREN, 2012, p. 176).

Cecilia Björklund Dahlgren has done extensive pioneer work in order to strengthen the position of artistic dance at school. She will not give up but continues the work of getting all children at school to dance.

Concluding thoughts

As was written in the introduction each of the three portraits of Bergman-Österberg, Elefalk and Björklund Dahlgren is different, but together they illustrate how education, passion and strategic thinking can move mountains. Embedded in their ideas is the belief that bodily exercise could make a difference, make children and the youth capable and competent through the training and schooling in movement education and training. Bergman-Österberg engaged in the building and institutionalization of a female PETE. As many of the early pioneers the departure point was a gender separate stance of others. This was - perhaps the only visible path for her and many other early pioneers to choose in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Elefalk worked within the field of sports and paid attention to the importance of equal ways of doing sports. Björklund Dahlgren entered the gendered field of physical culture from another angle; she seeks to broaden aspects of what movement education at school can contribute – for both girls and boys. Today, gender viewed as a social construction gives new and other possibilities to counteract inequity and hidden power orders. What the early pioneers would have thought about present conditions for women in the field of physical culture, one can only assume.

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