

## Education - a Tool for Emancipation?

Social mobility among participants in the first classes at Brunnsvik Folk College, Sweden 1906-1920

As the Swedish labour movement grew stronger, the need for more theoretically skilled organizers became important. But access to education higher than primary level had not been attainable for everyone in Sweden in the late 1800s. This was however changing rapidly. Among the new forms of educational institutions were the *folkhögskolor* (folk colleges, or folk high-schools), started by organizations in the civil society, or private persons for philanthropical reasons. They quickly became important institutions as they opened up higher forms of education to new groups in society. One of these institutions was Brunnsvik.

This paper examines social mobility among the students in the first classes at the adult educational institution of Brunnsvik, 1906-1920. Brunnsvik became an important pillar in the labour movement: the most important place for intellectual education of its members. An investigation of the students' background will shed light on who they were when they enrolled at Brunnsvik: their political background, educational achievements, social class, and any previous occupations. How would they benefit from further education and what were their future prospects? Did their time at Brunnsvik improve their life chances? Was the education a tool for personal emancipation, or for the emancipation of the whole labour movement?

By using the historical international standard for classification of occupations, HISCO, and one of the social mobility schemes sprung from it, HISCLASS, I will map the social background and investigate social mobility of the students and their families. These quantitative results will be compared to an in depth investigation into more qualitative data from a number of individual cases. The importance of the educational programme at Brunnsvik and its place in the labour movement will also be put into a historical context. Hopefully, this paper will present the young labour movement's first attempts to create a political education for its cadre.

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