Neither compulsory nor public or national? Translating the Swedish terminology of 19th-century primary schools, teachers, and pupils

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Abstract

The 19th century saw the rise of mass schooling. School acts were published, increasing number of teachers were trained and hired, and children increasingly attended schools. This development was strongest in Europe and North America, with schooling in the USA, France and Prussia leading the way. While this development with its national and regional variations continues to puzzle researchers, it also creates challenges of communication and presentation. What English language terminology should be used when denoting schools, teachers, and pupils in non-Anglo-Saxon countries? In this article, I address a part of this question by examining the case of Swedish 19th-century primary schools. By relating these schools to those in other countries, and the terminology used in the research literature, this article provides recommendations for English-language terms to be used when denoting these schools, the teachers who taught them, and the children who attended them. This terminology includes primary school, parish school and mass schooling, and the terms used to denote teachers and their training include junior schoolteacher, primary school teacher and term teacher training schools. As a result, this article problematizes the use of terms such as compulsory, public, state, and national when describing schools in 19th-century contexts such as that of Sweden, indicates the varying meanings of terms such as popular education, and highlights the problems of not translating terms such as *folkskola*.

Keywords

Primary schools; translation; educational systems; history of education

Introduction

From the 19th century onwards, schooling increasingly became both a norm and a reality for all children (Meyer, Ramirez, & Soysal, 1992). In the late 19th and the early 20th century, many or most of school-aged children in the minority world of the West attended school, at least for a couple of years. Thus, when schooling was no longer an exclusive experience for society's elite, segmented parallel school systems arose: the majority of children attended schools for the masses, while a selected few enrolled in educational institutions for the elite, such as English grammar schools or German *gymnasien*.

This international expansion of educational systems had transnational as well as national features. While all national educational systems were affected by international trends that may be described in terms of *transfer*, *borrowing*, *lending* or *reception* (Fuchs & Roldán Vera, 2019), they also had national, regional, and local character. In this article, I address the challenges that the historian of education faces in this context when translating terms used to describe schooling in various national languages. I focus on the 19th-century Swedish *folkskolor*, which provided children with basic knowledge of reading, writing, religion, and mathematics. I will explore the English language terms that may be used to denote these schools, and discuss the terms used

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to denote teachers, teacher training and the children who attended these schools.

As this article illustrates, there are no simple or easy solutions when translating historical educational systems, and the best options depend heavily on the historical context and the questions that the researcher poses. In the history of schooling in Sweden, this article shows that verbatim translations are not a self-evident choice, and that not translating a terminology is neither a neutral nor a particularly communicative option. Instead, readers are encouraged to base their translation on an intimate knowledge of the educational institutions that they are denoting, and choosing terms that communicate well with the international field of research that they are communicating with.

As an exercise in translation, this article is about equivalencies. In the history of translations, ranging from sacred text and philosophical theses to television shows, the idea of equivalence has been fundamental; that is, the meaning of the text should remain when translated from a language to another. Although this idea of equivalent effect and equivalent response might be challenging from a theoretical perspective, it has remained fundamental when translating texts (Kasparek, 1983; Munday, 2012).

Translating texts is a complex task, both when relating to specific texts, but also on a theoretical level. One may be aware that terms encompass different kinds of meanings. Mona Baker (1992) has stressed the importance of the propositional meaning of a word (that it, what it refers to), but also its expressive meanings (for example, positive or negative attitudes) and evoked meaning (of place and time, but also gender and social group). In this case, such a typology highlights some of the challenges that the translation of 19th-century schools creates. How do you translate Swedish terms that denote schools that did not exist in, say, England or USA? And how do you translate terms whose expressive and evoked meaning has changed over time?

Another challenge is that of communication. Should translations highlight the strangeness of our past, or are they supposed to enable a more immediate understanding of a text (Richardson, 1999)? In line with Peter Collins, the translator of Émile Durkheim, I have attempted to "walk a tight-rope between the fluent and the accurate, the elegant and the literal, the readable and the written; and this is a tightrope from which he must inevitably fall periodically into the saving net of compromise" (Peter Collins in Durkheim, 1977, p. xxix). This balancing act includes, not least, the ability to determine when some terms can be translated word for word (metaphrase), and when it is necessary to paraphrase in order to capture the meaning of a term (Kasparek, 1986).

As the act of translation is inherent in all historical research (Palonen, 2012), the present article encourages readers to reflect further on the terminology we use when examining the school systems of the past. While historians of education certainly have made good progress in examining the international and transnational features of 19th-century education, reflections on the terminology used when examining primary school remain scarce, even though researchers have made different choices. Swedish primary schools (*folkskolor*) have been denoted as, for example, common schools (Boli, 1989), elementary schools (Larsson, 2016), and primary schools (Westberg, 2020), and described in terms of compulsory education (Soysal & Strang, 1989) or mass schooling (Landahl, 2015).

This article adds to this literature by discussing these choices, in order to take further steps to clarify how to communicate and interpret the Swedish 19th-century school system. As this article indicates, this is an important task. Proper translations contribute to our correct understanding of these schools, and although there are no perfect translations, there are certainly several Anglo-Saxon terms that may be recommended, and others that should be avoided when describing 19th-century schooling in Sweden.

Basic schooling for the masses: the Swedish *folkskola*

The segmented school systems of the 19th century were based on a distinction between schools for the masses, which enrolled the majority of schoolchildren, and elite schools for a selected few, the latter based on the heritage from early modern Latin schools (Schriewer, Orivel, & Swing, 2000). The terms used to denote the former often indicated that they targeted the common people, the lower classes or the laboring classes. Apart from the Swedish *folkskola* and the Prussian *Volksschule*, these included the *almueskoler* of Denmark and the *kansakouluja* of Finland. Other terms indicate that these schools provided the first level of knowledge, or were the first level of the educational system: the Dutch *lagere scholen* (literally lower schools), the Austrian *Trivialschulen*, the French *écoles primaires*, the Italian *scuole primarie*, the Spanish *educación primaria elemental*, and the primary schools or elementary schools of England (Westberg, Boser, & Brühwiler, 2019).

Despite the variation in terms, these schools often had similar features. In general, the 19th century primary school systems were decentralized (Lindert, 2004). That is, the local school organization carried the main burden of organizing and funding the school systems. Over time, however, the central governments' grip over these schools were tightened, using central government subsidies, state school inspectors, and national curricula (Lindert, 2004; Westberg, 2020). While attempts were made to provide a more encompassing education, primary schools generally only provided a very limited schooling, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Children merely spent a couple of years in schooling, and the semesters were comparatively short. As a result, teaching was generally restricted to reading, writing, math, and Christian knowledge. This was also in line with the purpose of these schools. Unlike their 21st century counterparts, they were not intended to prepare children for secondary schools, but to provide basic literacy (Westberg, 2020).

This was certainly the case in Sweden. Here, the school act of 1842 distinguished between a minimum amount of knowledge that all children were required to learn regardless of circumstances, and a full curriculum. The former included reading, catechism, biblical history, writing, mathematics, and church singing (the latter was not required of those who lacked singing talent). The latter also included subjects such as history, geography, natural history, and physical education. Still, in 1859, only 7 percent of the schools were estimated to provide an education above this minimum (Westberg, 2019).

Against this historical context of primary schooling in 19th century Europe, *primary school* and *elementary school* are two good choices when denoting these schools in Sweden. These are often used terms that clearly communicate that what is discussed is the first years of schooling. I prefer the term *primary school*: it alludes nicely to other contemporary terms such as *écoles primaires*, *scuole primarie*,

and *educación primaria elemental*, and fits current definition of primary education.

The standard definition of primary education today is that of ISCED. As part of international efforts to promote education, UNESCO created the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) in order to collect, compile, and present comparable data on education. This resulted in the first version, ISCED-78, which was updated in ISCED-97 and most recently in ISCED-11 (Sauvageot, 2008). The result of the ISCED project was a nomenclature that is commonly used when presenting and comparing current European educational systems as consisting of early childhood education, primary education, lower secondary education, and upper secondary education. Following this classification, primary education is defined as the stage that often starts at the ages of 5–7 and has a duration of about six years. Denoted as primary, elementary, or basic education, the purpose of primary education is described as "sound basic education in reading, writing and mathematics, along with an elementary understanding of other subjects such as history, geography, natural science, social sciences, art and music" (OECD, 2015, 29). While 19th-century *folkskolor* certainly did not live up to present-day expectations, such definitions of primary education make primary school a useful term when clarifying what kind of schools, the Swedish *folkskolor* were: a kind of 19th-century primary school.

The term *primary schooling* also fits well in the context of a dichotomy between primary schooling and primary education. In such a dichotomy where the former denotes a more restrictive educational practice (Campbell, 2005), primary schooling does align with the purpose of these 19th-century institutions that were intended to instill some knowledge and moral values among the "great unwashed" (Heywood, 2017, p. 206), rather than providing them with a comprehensive education. This may also be linked to the debate on how education should be defined (Dekker, 2001). If true education requires a symmetrical relationship between the adult and the child, these 19th-century schools certainly provided primary schooling rather than primary education.

However, no term is ideal. As with almost all terms used to describe 19th-century schooling, the term *primary schooling* requires at least a brief presentation, so that the reader understands what kind of school this was. In this case, the author would be expected to note that 19th-century primary schools merely provided a basic schooling, that enrolment and attendance rates were generally much lower than today, and that primary school pupils most often did not attend secondary schools. That is, we cannot assume or expect that 19th-century primary schools were similar to our current primary schools. When using the term elementary school, one should also make it clear that these were not the grammar schools that the Swedish *elementarskolor* were. This distinction between primary schools for the people, and grammar schools such as *Nya elementarskolan* for a selected few, has been used as a vantage point in Esbjörn Larsson's analysis of monitorial education (Larsson, 2016).

For those wishing to stress the particular features of 19th-century schooling, there are also other options. I see the benefits of using the term basic schools, since these schools certainly provided children with (at most) a basic education. In that sense, this term also fits the current usage of that term in some national and international contexts. The latter include ISCED, as mentioned above, and the former Bulgaria, where the basic school denotes the first four years of compulsory schooling (Hörner, Döberg, Reuter, & Von Kopp, 2015, 142).

Another useful term is that of *mass schooling* (see usage in, e.g., Meyer et al., 1992). As terms such as *folkskola*, this term implies that these were schools intended for the masses and not for the elite. For the same reasons, I find the term *popular education* valuable (see Braster, 2011). It is, however, advisable to note that this term does not only cover the education provided in schools, but also education in other settings. In the Swedish context, where home-instruction (*hemundervisning*) still played an important role in the mid-19th century, popular education is consequently a useful term when discussing a reality where children attended school but in many cases became literate through home instruction (Lindmark, 2004).

The term popular education does, nevertheless, require a clear presentation when used, since it is a good illustration of how the meaning of a word depends on context. Sjaak Braster (2011) has identified three meanings of the term. First, in line with Enlightenment ideals, the term "popular" would indicate a popular education accessible for all. Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi did, for example, claim that his method would promote an education for all children (see also Horlacher, 2011). Secondly, popular education has been defined as education targeting the broad layers of population, that is the masses or the poor. This could include the schools organized by philanthropic associations or poverty relief boards. Thirdly, in the post-war era, the term became increasingly linked to literacy campaigns and educational efforts in third world countries: a pedagogy of the oppressed, to use the book title of Paulo Freire. In those instances, popular education is linked to empowerment, and so-called bottom-up approaches where the initiative, content and form is shaped by those participating in popular education. It is in this latter context that the term popular education has been used to describe the education of adults outside of the school system (Berg and Edquist, 2017).

Parish schools rather than compulsory or public schools

Apart from these terms, there are also other more or less suitable options when discussing 19th-century primary schooling. As is evident from below, I argue that commonly used terms such as compulsory, public, state, or national are problematic or inappropriate when applied on 19th-century Sweden.

Addressing these schools as *compulsory schools* (see, e.g., Miller, 2000; McCulloch & Woodin, 2020) is certainly problematic. Gary McCulloch and Tom Woodin argued that "[c]ompulsory mass schooling involves a basic presumption that there is a duty as well as a right for all children in a society to go to school under certain conditions for a particular period of time" and that this entails regulations of when this period starts and ends (McCulloch & Woodin, 2020, p. 2).

Like many of its international counterparts (Westberg, 2020), however, Swedish primary schools were not compulsory. As with many other school acts, the School Act of 1842 did not define when children were of school age, or the expected number of schools years. Instead, the School Act merely noted that children were expected to start attending school from the age of nine at the latest. This may be compared to the lack of school-aged in the French Guizot Law of 1833 and the 1864 Education Statute of the Russian Empire, or the vaguely encompassing Dutch definition of school age as "youth of all ages" in the school act of 1806 (Westberg, 2020). Schooling in Sweden was also not compulsory in the sense that enrolment and attendance was enforced. Like school acts in many other countries, the School

Act of 1842 did not prescribe any substantial punishment for parents who did not send their children to school. The Act also allowed children under specific circumstances to stay home from school (Westberg, 2019).

Apart from compulsory schooling, *public school* is a term that should be avoided when discussing the Swedish case. While used to denote publicly funded primary and secondary schools in the US, this term may be misleading since it is currently also used to describe some elite schools in Great Britain with significant tuition fees. Swedish 19th-century primary schools were not elite schools and tuition fees did not play a major role in the financing of primary schools.

The term public also lacks precision. In the 19th century, the local organization of schooling varied. Some school systems were based on the local church organization, others on secular municipalities and communes (such as Italy and Spain), or a mix of public or private and religious and secular organizations, like in England and Russia (Westberg, 2020). The Swedish primary school system was based on the church organization. In 1842, the first Swedish primary school act requested that the more than 2,300 Swedish parishes, either by themselves or in cooperation with a neighboring parish, created school districts that established at least one permanent or ambulatory school. These school districts were to be governed by a school board (*skol-styrelse*) chaired by the parish vicar or his representative, and the parish meeting (*sockenstämma*). The parish meeting, led by the vicar, had the final say in matters of school spending, and was also the body that appointed school board members and teachers (Westberg, 2019).

In this context, public schooling may not be the most suitable term to denote primary schooling in Sweden. While these schools were public in the sense that they were mainly funded by a combination of central government grants and local taxes, it may be discussed to what extent parishes and other local institutions should be defined as public (Gustafsson, 1989). Nevertheless, the term *public school* does follow a common pattern regarding how we categorize and name schools after their organizing body. Apart from the broad typology of public and private schools, the 19th century also saw English *national schools* founded by National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor (Dixon, 2019), and the Russian *zemstvo schools*, managed by a local government body (*zemstvos*) created in the second half of the 19th century (Eklof, 1984).

In this context, *parish school* is, however, certainly a better and more precise option than both public schools and state schools when denoting the Swedish primary school of the 19th century. This term indicates how primary schools were dependent on the organizational and financial structure of this parishes, which organized the local rural communities of Sweden and ran and funded the rise of mass schooling in Sweden (Westberg, 2017). The term parish school also highlights the content of the schooling provided. Still in the mid-1860s, the focus of teaching remained what one might expect from a parish school: reading, writing, biblical history, and catechism (Westberg, 2019). As a key to understanding this educational expansion, *parish school* is therefore a suitable translation. It also implies useful comparisons to Scottish parish schools (Anderson, 1983), and enables us to discuss the differences between the parish-run primary schools of the 19th century in Sweden, and the municipal schools of the 20th century.

In addition to comprehensive school and public school, I also suggest that the term

common school should not be applied on the Swedish case, as done by US scholars such as John Boli (1986). Common schools, once described as "the most American thing about America" (Tyack, 2001, p. 1), had very specific features and the term has been used to describe primary schools in the US prior to 1900. These were schools governed by local communities in townships or school districts consisting of a group of farm families or religious parishes. Thus, they were schools that were common to such a community, funded by that community, and taught the subjects that each community valued. In the US context, the common schools contrasted with the public school system of the twentieth century, which was increasingly under regional and professional control (Tyack, 2001; Goldin & Katz, 2003).

There are also reasons to be careful when considering formulations such as national schools or national school systems, when describing 19th-century schools. While mass schooling, both in Sweden and elsewhere, certainly had a national scope and nationalistic objectives, the Swedish system of mass schooling was not national, in the sense that it was intended to create a nationally uniform system of primary schools. In contrast, it encouraged regional diversity among schools where the main responsibility for schooling was held by the local parishes (Westberg, 2022). So, while Europe saw schools that were actually termed national schools, including the state-funded national schools of Ireland and the above-mentioned national schools of England, the Swedish 19th-century school system is, in this respect, more aptly described as a regionalized school system consisting of parish schools, instead of national schools.

A final note on the term *folkskola*. Since it is a challenging task to choose an appropriate English term, an author might be tempted either to merely use the Swedish term *folkskola*, or to translate it verbatim to folk school. Both these choices are problematic. The latter term folk school has been used to denote residential adult education (Klein, 2018) akin to that of folk high schools (*folkhögskola*). The first option, not to translate the term, also creates problems. While not translating a term creates a certain sense of historical specificity – it is true that only Sweden had Swedish *folkskolor* – this option has its drawbacks. Apart from not communicating what kind of school this was to the foreign reader, this term might also imply certain meanings for certain national audiences.

In Sweden, the *folkskola* was part of the segmented school system of the 19th century that the children of the broad layers of the population attended, in contrast to the children of the elite who attended grammar schools (*läroverk*). Here, the term *folkskola* –literally translated as the school for the people – was linked to enlightenment ideas of education for all, but also to conservative educational views arguing that the broader population required merely a restricted education for their subordinate position in society (Lindmark, 2011). In that sense, these *folkskolor* were certainly not folk schools in the US sense of the word, and they were indeed neither Norwegian nor Danish *folkeskoler*. In contrast to the Swedish *folkskola* and the Norwegian 19th-century *allmueskole*, the Norwegian 20th century *folkeskole* provided a social inclusive education for all children (Volckmar, 2016). Similarly, the Swedish 19th-century *folkskola* should not be mistaken for the nine-year Danish *folkeskole* of the 21st century, which is more akin to the Swedish comprehensive school (*grundskolan*) established in the 1960s (Hörner et al., 2015).

School types

Translations concerning mass schooling are further complicated by the fact that there was not just one kind of 19th-century primary school. Varying distinctions between ambulatory and non-ambulatory, urban and rural schools were recurring in Europe. In Imperial Austria, for example, these school types included major schools (*Hauptschulen*) intended for cities, and the standard primary schools (*Trivialschulen*), which was the most common school type. In addition, parish schools (*Pfarr-Schulen*) were introduced with a slightly enlarged curriculum. Catering to distant and sparsely populated areas, branch schools (*Excurrendo-Schulen*) were introduced as a kind of ambulatory school moving in between villages, and provisional schools (*Notschulen*) were allowed when parents could not afford the standard primary schools (Cvrcek, 2020, 54–55).

The entire development of different types of primary schools in Sweden (see **Table 1**) is too complicated to be covered in this article. But it may be noted that, prior to the School Act of 1842, a wide assortment of village schools (*byskolor*), parish schools (*sockenskolor*) and urban poor schools (f*attigskolor*) existed (e.g., Larsson, 2016), alongside individual schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, funded by parishes, villages, or parents (Åhlman, 2019). Prior to the School Act, Sweden also saw a rapid rise of monitorial schools (*växelundervisningsskolor*), the Swedish term in itself a translation of the German term *Wechselseitige Schuleinrichtung* (Larsson, 2015).

When defining primary schools, the first primary school act of 1842 distinguished between permanent (*fasta*) schools located on one specific site (often in the vicinity of the parish church), and ambulatory (*flyttbara*) schools, where the teacher moved between villages. "Ambulatory schools" appears as an appropriate term. It has been used in studies of schooling in Finland and Iceland (Kotilainen, 2013; Garðarsdóttir & Guttormsson, 2014) and in contemporary 19th-century English descriptions of the Swedish school system (*Minutes of the Committee of the Council on Education: with Appendices 1847–48. Vol. II*, 1848). Other alternatives could include itinerant schools (as they were taught by itinerant schoolteachers), or house-to-house school, which was the Australian term used 1881–1923. In contrast to the Australian school type, the Swedish ambulatory schools were taught by fully trained primary school teachers (Westberg 2022; NSW 2022).

Table 1: Primary school types in 19th-century Sweden.

Note: The definition of each school type developed over time. For example, junior schools were not always intended for the youngest school children, and there were various kinds of junior schools. For a more detailed presentation of these school types, see Westberg, 2022.

School type	National name
Primary school	*Folkskola*
Permanent or ambulatory primary school	*Fast eller flyttbar folkskola*
Junior school	*Småskola*
Minor school	*Mindre skola*
Minor primary school	*Mindre folkskola*
Replacement school	*Ersättningsskola*
Village school	*Byskola*
Auxiliary school	*Hjälpskola*

Adding to the ambulatory schools, so-called minor schools (*mindre skolor*) were created in 1853. They were introduced as a simpler kind of school for distant areas, but were

in 1863 redefined as junior schools (*småskolor*) intended for the younger more junior school-aged children. In 1875, minor schools (*mindre skolor*) were again added to the set-up of primary schools. They were intended to provide a less extensive schooling for children in distant places, and were in 1882 renamed as minor primary schools (*mindre folkskolor*) (Westberg, 2022).

This range of school types is a good illustration of the challenges of translating 19th-century terms in the history of education more generally. How should one translate terms to English when even the Swedish terms are difficult to understand for a 21st century Swedish audience? In the case of these school types, the Swedish adjectives "små" (small) and "mindre" (smaller or minor) are quite vague, but they do provide indication of the kind of schools they denote: schools that provided a less extensive education for younger children in smaller school building, often placed in smaller villages. The comparison with English junior schools, which targeted children from the age of seven or eight, is also helpful (Blyth, 1965). When using these terms, such explanations will be useful.

However, there are also other options to consider when denoting these schools. The minor schools and minor primary schools may be compared to the provisional schools of Imperial Austria, where complete primary schools could not be afforded, or the provisional schools of Australia. The latter was intended for sparsely populated areas where 15–25 children could be expected to attend, and where untrained teachers were allowed to be employed (NSW 2022).

These challenges of translations also pertain to the more or less publicly acknowledged school types that existed in Sweden during the 19th century, at times supported by state school inspectors. These include replacement schools (*ersättningsskolor*), village schools (*byskolor*) and auxiliary schools (*hjälpskolor*). The latter schools were intended to assist regular primary schools, and should therefore not be mistaken for the Prussian *Hilfsschulen*, which targeted children with special needs (see, e.g., Garz, Moser, & Wünsch, 2021).

In addition to providing yet another illustration of the challenges of translation, these school types also illustrate the importance of translating their denotations, and thus acknowledge their existence. At times, historians of education over-use the term primary school when discussing 19th-century settings and, as a result, downplay the differences that existed between different school types. When presenting 19th-century schooling, we should not forget to note that there was not one type of primary schools back then, but a multitude of schools including the Swedish junior schools and replacement schools, the Austrian branch school, the Russian zemstvo schools, and the Australian provisional schools.

Consequently, these issues are not mere issues of translation, but have consequences for how we describe 19th-century school systems. In Sweden, about half of the primary schools in the mid-19th century were ambulatory (Westberg, 2022). Therefore, when discussing schooling at this point in time, it may not only be fitting to refrain from describing the school system as public or compulsory. It may also be appropriate to talk about the largely *ambulatory school system* of Sweden, so that English language readers do not imagine a school system that was, like that of the 21st century, mainly based on permanent schools.

Teacher positions, teacher training, and school children

The importance of acknowledging the different school types when translating national experiences of schooling into English also applies to teacher positions. In the School Act of 1842, the terms used to denote teachers in general was *lärare* and *skol-lärare*, which translate literally to teacher and schoolteacher, respectively. Since these teacher positions were increasingly organized in a manner that is recognized today, with teachers working in permanent school buildings, receiving tax-funded wages in permanent contract, I prefer the term teacher to the more archaic term schoolmaster. While in current Swedish language usage, *lärare* may denote both male and female teachers, the gendered reality of the 19th century is an argument for differentiating between male and female teachers.

In Sweden, the main distinction was between trained junior schoolteachers (*småskollärare*) and primary school teachers (*folkskollärare*). The training for junior schoolteachers was shorter, and their minimum salary was a third of that of primary school teachers in the late 1880s (Mellberg, 1996, p. 128). Both categories of teachers could work in junior schools and minor primary schools, but in the latter school types, it was more common that junior schoolteachers or untrained teachers worked. In addition, schools employed non-regular primary school teachers (*extra-ordinära folkskollärare*) and assistant primary school teachers (*biträdande folkskollärare*). These distinctions are crucial, not the least since many teachers were not regular primary school teachers in the 19th century. In 1882, 46 percent of all teachers worked in junior schools in 1882 (BiSOS P 1882). Therefore, when discussing the status or wages of teachers, it is crucial to clarify whether junior school or primary school teachers are being discussed.

The positions as regular primary school teachers required formal training. In the 19th century, teacher training did not require more than the equivalent of having attended primary school. It may therefore be described as a kind of lower secondary education that expanded from a one-year program to a three-year program in 1862 and a four-year program in 1878 (Bertilsson, 2019). In Swedish language, these institutions were denoted as *folkskoleseminarium*, which indicated a link to the German *Schullehrseminar*. Unlike universities, these institutions did contribute to the field of higher education and science. Instead, teachers were to be prepared by receiving an education that had the same form and content as they themselves should provide schoolchildren with (Sörensen, 1942; see also Linne, 2001). To denote these institutions that merely required primary education of some kind, meaning that these institutions were placed on a lower secondary level, the term *teacher training schools* is a suitable choice that enables a differentiation from the 20th-century teacher training colleges on an upper secondary or even higher education level (Ogren, 1995; Lefty, 2019).

Apart from the terms used to denote teachers and their training, one might also reflect on the terms used to denote the children attending school. While the terms *pupil* and *student* are often used as synonyms, pupil has in certain contexts been used to children on primary and secondary level, while student denotes those attending higher education. In the context of the history of 19th-century primary schooling, the terms *pupils* and *school pupils* does work very well (see, e.g., Caruso, 2022; Wright, 2012). The ambivalence of pupil and

student may, however, be a reason to use the term *schoolchild*.

In the context of 19th-century primary schools, it may also be useful to note what is meant by a pupil or a schoolchild. These terms are commonly used to denote children who regularly attend school (Willms, 2014) and are formally enrolled in school: that is also the 21st century usage of the term. School enrolment rates are used to measure the latter, by relating the number of children enrolled in school to the entire population of school-aged children (Baker & Halabi, 2014). In the 19th century, for which primary school enrolment of children 7–14 in Sweden has been estimated at 65 percent and attendance of enrolled pupils at 34 percent in 1868 (Ljungberg & Nilsson, 2009, tab. 1), such an understanding of pupils or schoolchildren might need to be nuanced. In statistical reports still preserved at the Ministry of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs (*Ecklesiastikdepartementet*), the terms pupil and schoolchild were not used. Instead, a distinction was made between school-aged children "who are taught" ("*som undervisas*"), and school-aged children "lacking instruction" ("*som sakna undervisning*") (see also the terms used by Paulsson, 1866, 432).

Therefore, pupils or schoolchildren in this 19th-century context did not necessarily attend school regularly. Instead, the definition was more akin to having been taught in a school during the past school year, in contrast to not having been taught in a school. Consequently, the term used in the first major compilation of national school statistics (BiSOS P 1868, p. vii) was "*skolbesökande barn*" (literally, school-visiting children); that is, children who have visited or attended school during the past school year to some extent This definition informed the school statistics, which differentiated between children not attending school, and children attending school 1–60 days, 60–120 days, and above 120 days. As this typology indicates, all attendance above one school day meant that child was defined as a schoolchild (BiSOS P 1868, p. 2-3). Therefore, when attempting to communicate the low attendance rates of 19th-century schooling, *school-visiting children* could be an apt term to denote pupils in this context, in contrast to the schoolchildren of the twentieth century who were expected to attend school each school day.

Conclusion

In this article, I have provided insights into some of the challenges that researchers face when they attempt to translate terms on the 19th-century school system to the English language. As this paper has shown, some of these challenges depend on the differences between various national 19th-century school systems, and others are due to the differences between 19th-century and 21st-century schooling.

Based on these challenges, I have suggested that *primary school* is an apt translation of the Swedish *folkskola*. For those wishing to highlight the specific historical context, parish school is also recommended, unlike terms such as public school or state school. Neither compulsory school nor common school are appropriate terms to describe these primary schools that were not compulsory, and were not organized as the US common schools. I have also provided suggestions for how to translate the terminology on school types, teachers, teacher training, and school children.

Apart from providing a basis for further discussions on the translation of the Swedish 19th-century terminology, this article also adds to the literature on 19th-century school systems. In discussing the choice of English terms, I have

argued that we must be careful when choosing our terminology. Most importantly, I have argued that we must use the term *compulsory* very carefully. If 19th-century schools were not compulsory, we should not use this term.

I have also stressed the importance of acknowledging the existence of school types, and the regional character of 19th-century school systems. As a result, I have suggested that it might be valuable to describe the Swedish mid-19th-century primary schools as part of a largely ambulatory school system, and that we should present it as a regionalized school system, rather than national school systems. Such considerations also include how to denote 19th-century schoolchildren and their teachers. In order to capture their irregular attendance, it might be more apt to denote them as school-visiting children, rather than schoolchildren or pupils. When discussing Swedish school teachers, we should distinguish between junior schoolteachers and primary school teachers since these two categories of teacher did not only have different training, but also were clearly differentiated in terms of status and wages during the 19th century.

To conclude, these recommendations can only remain preliminary, not the least since our choice of terminology is dependent on the research fields we participate in, and our aims and research questions. But the option nevertheless remains limited, and this article does in that sense provide a necessary overview when deciding on what terms to use. It also offers encouragement to further develop the terminology we use when we discuss 19th century schooling. As this article indicates, there are certainly good reasons to be careful and considerate when choosing English language terms when presenting research on non-English educational systems.

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