

Kristín Bjarnadóttir: *Controversies in Nordic Cooperation on New Mathematics Curriculum Reform in 1960–1967*

In November 1959, a seminar on new thinking in school mathematics was held in Royaumont, France. Participants from Denmark, Norway and Sweden, university professors and upper secondary school teachers, agreed upon organising Nordic cooperation on reform of mathematics teaching. Finland was invited to join. The goal of this study is to analyse this cooperation of four independent states with different legislations and school systems, but similarities in many respects, languages of the same North-Germanic origin, and a new platform for cooperation, the Nordic Council, founded in the 1950s. The school systems in all the four countries, were undergoing reforms, extending seven years' compulsory school to nine years.

The Nordic Committee for Modernising Mathematics Teaching, *Nordiska kommittén för modernisering av matematikundervisningen*, NKMM, was set up under the Nordic Council's Culture Commission. Each of the four countries appointed four persons to the committee. Its members were mathematicians, mathematics teachers, and school administrators. The programme for the common Nordic reform was to analyse the situation within each country, to work out proposals to curriculum plans, and to write experimental texts. Support was gained from the OEEC, later OECD, and the Nordic Council. Other costs were divided between the four countries where Sweden with the largest population bore the greatest share.

The committee appointed teams to work out curriculum proposals, and in continuation writing teams for experimental texts. The committee's main concern was mathematics teaching in grades 7–12 for age 13–19. However, it was decided to handle mathematics courses throughout the school. For that purpose, the committee contacted experts for the first six grades. Joint Nordic manuscripts were to be prepared. Persons from each country would translate and adapt the joint publications to each language.

This research focuses on the cooperation at compulsory-level. The research question is to which degree could four independent nations create a common school mathematics policy. The research method is analysing archived documents, official reports, and scholars' accounts.

Examination of the archived documents about activities of the committee reveals that many obstacles hindered the realisation of producing common material. There were language problems, members of the writing teams had different opinions on which direction the reform was to head, and there were questions if the secretarial centre, situated in the Swedish culture ministry, was too powerful. Gradually, each nation took its own direction. The Danes and the Swedes were the most active in the cooperation, others were more hesitating. After ending the cooperation, very little material was published in common to two or more countries.

At the same time, a long-needed discussion arose about curriculum, stagnated in particular routines and topics. The reform cooperation had various impacts on the curriculum reforms in the individual countries.

## References

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