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ARTICLE

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Women's vocational education 1890–1990 in Finland and Sweden: the example of vocational home economics education

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that women's vocational education needs to be viewed in relation to the development of vocational education and training (VET) more broadly. The history of women's VET is also a history of the term "women's education" itself and how, almost a century after it was introduced, this term is hardly used. Instead, we see gendered vocations and vocational programmes that predominantly recruit women.

The aim of this study is to investigate and compare the rise and fall of VET specifically targeting women in Finland and Sweden, in particular the kind of VET described in educational policy during the 20th century as education that was predestined for women. What societal motives underpinned the establishment and development of domestic education as VET? How can we understand the dismantling of education targeting women? Our primary sources are government inquiries concerning VET for women and previous research in this field. We argue that the reasons for the development of women's VET reflect not only how certain social groups understood societal needs at the time, but that developing VET was a response to the increasingly significant but complex roles women played in the public arena.^{dv}

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Introduction

History of education tends to focus on one kind of educational type, rather than situating different types of education in relation to broader societal development. Michelsen and Stenström (2018) suggest that the development of vocational education (VET) can be understood in relation to general education. As important as it is to contextualise VET in relation to general education, women's VET must be viewed in relation to the development of VET more broadly, since most VET historically has been highly gendered (Broberg, Lindberg, and Wärvik [submitted](#); Heikkinen 2001; Martin 1994). Interestingly enough, the history of women's VET is also a history of the term *women's education* itself and how, almost a century after it

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was introduced, this term is now hardly used; in its places, we now recognise that gendered vocations and vocational programmes that focus on recruiting women.

The aim of this article is to investigate and compare the rise and fall of the phenomenon of VET that was specifically designated for women in both Finland and Sweden. The two countries have a common history as one nation for approximately 500 years, until 1809, when Finland became part of the Russian empire with the status of a Grand Duchy. In 1917, Finland declared independency. Despite the formal political boundary, the two countries have continued to share some traits in development, particularly in education. The VET systems became more similarly organised than those of Denmark and Norway in the early 20th century. Frequent study visits between Finnish and Swedish advocates and organisers of women's VET are evident in research (Hjälmeskog et al. 2009; Laukia 2013; Sysiharju 1995). However, increasingly over the decades, some major differences have also emerged. Domestic education for women is a recognised phenomenon in western educational history although it is not always described as vocational and development can be assumed to be different in different societal contexts as in the Nordic case noted earlier. For women's VET in particular there are two things of special interest in the case of Finland and Sweden. Both recognised the need for domestic education as VET earlier than the other Nordic countries alongside of the implementation of agricultural VET for male students. In both countries, *household societies*¹ identified school-based education as a means for spreading knowledge developed within agricultural and technological contexts to farmers in the country. These societies found the prosperity of the nation was related to the prosperity of the family and women's contribution to the production was recognised as significant (Marjanen 2013). Thus, similarities are expected in this investigation and the more important questions we pursue are what similarities as well as differences in societal motives and tensions can be identified and how are they related to the development of domestic education as vocational education in the two countries?

We distinguish between two types of women's VET: one that includes female connotations within broad VET schemes targeting certain occupational sectors (but not pointed out as for women only); and another that is described in educational policy documents as VET specifically designed for women, as was the case in Sweden until the 1960s (SOU 1966:3) and in Finland until the 1970s (Laukia 2013). Our focus here is on the latter. These kinds of educational programmes have often been dismissed as representing domestic work (within the home) and thereby not included or marginalised with a few sentences, in research in the history of VET as in e.g. Michelsen and Stenström (2018) and Sjöstrand (1965). However, in most Western countries, VET is and remains a gendered issue, and Sweden and Finland are no exceptions. Our focus is on initial VET specifically designed for the domestic sector, taking the following research questions as our starting points: What societal motives underpinned the emergence, establishment and development of domestic

education as VET? How can we understand the dismantling of education targeting women in particular?

The domestic sector can be seen as mirroring the development of the Nordic social democratic welfare state during the 20th century, which was characterised by universal social rights, an expanded middle class and a reorganisation of the relationships between family, the market, and the state (Esping-Andersen 1990). This was also a period of urbanisation that included the development of new family patterns. One important reason to investigate the history of women's VET, while simultaneously examining the phenomenon of women's vocational education, is that access to education played an important role in enabling women's participation in public society (Broady et al. 2000; Huhtala and Tähtinen 2014; Klemelä 1999). Previous international research has tended to focus on the importance of philanthropic movements, activism, such as the suffragette movement and higher education and academic occupational education (Pedersen Senders 1979). In both Finnish and Swedish studies, women's movements were identified as having a significant influence on the establishment of women's VET through lobbying, organising, and often financing women's VET, and thus being an important part of the development of women's VET (c.f. Sysiharju 1995). Hence, it could be argued that research in women's VET is as important to understand the development of women's access to work, education public life. Comparative studies on VET have tended to focus on legislation and financing (c.f. Heikkinen 2004). Thus, VET has seldom been associated with societal transformations, unlike for instance the development of general and higher education; it has instead been primarily associated with economic development.

Societal Motives and Tensions: Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

Our point of departure is one of the basic assumptions of activity theory: that societal needs are powerful driving forces that motivate human activities (Leont'ev 1978) and 'denote objective orientation of activity' (Kaptelinin 2005, 8). Needs and motives are thus seen as culturally developed and collective rather than individual. However, neither can be understood as unitary, distinct, or easily definable. According to Miettinen (2005), needs and motives should instead be considered as a complex interplay of 'heterogeneous entities that are embedded in networks of activities and in economic and political relationships'. For this article, we have therefore focused on indications of such heterogeneous entities that are related to the emergence, establishment, development and dismantling of education aimed at women. Tensions are another important concept, related to motive in activity theory. These are signs of emerging new motives, disturbances or contradictory existing motives that challenge the accepted understanding that dominates the motives for societal activities. However, contradictions must 'be approached through their manifestations (. . .). We may also treat manifestations as constructions

or articulations of contradictions; in other words, contradictions do not speak for themselves, they become recognized' (Engeström and Sannino 2011, 371). The stages in the analytical process based on this theoretical approach are thereby: identifying societal motives, finding points of tensions, and the educational response to these. Comparisons are made not only between the two countries but also over time. Describing and comparing societal motives in two, in regard to women's VET, similar countries we strive to amplify the development of the phenomenon that are the focus and aim of the article. From social- and historical research perspective, understanding the rise and fall of domestic education as VET for women is contributing to the understanding of the welfare state coming into being during the 20th century.

Finland and Sweden provide a good comparison of the trajectory of formal education for women over a certain period in time, in part because these changes in both countries were motivated by the societal need to establish institutional initiatives. Importantly, comparisons are here made on a conceptual basis, meaning that we have a comparative focus on societal motives and tensions as related to the development of women's vocational education (Novóa & Yariv-Mashal, 2003). The time period covered by this article – 1890 to 1990 – encompasses the development, rise and fall of women's VET, the establishment of agricultural societies and education for women and the eventual creation of three-year upper secondary education programmes in both Finland and Sweden. The statistical data included in the material are not for quantitative comparison, instead, each of the phases identified is based on information on early establishment of schools (development), the increased interest in these educations signalled through the emergence of schools in various parts of the two countries, and finally the decreased interest in and consequently the closing of these schools.

The data for this article are based on secondary analyses of studies and reports from the two countries. In studying Finland, we used materials that included analyses of studies and statistics related to early vocational home economics education, as well as historical descriptions of individual schools (Lindberg & Salomaa submitted). The results in this section are based on research from disciplines, such as educational studies, sociology and history. We also added complementary studies on the emergence and development of Finnish VET in general. In the case of Sweden, we found very little research in this area; for this reason, our main sources are Official Reports from the Swedish government (*SOU*) and statistics. For each of the countries, national research-databases were used for the search of previous research in the respective language, complementary to searches in international databases.

When seeking out descriptions of vocational home economics education, we noted when the earliest schools were established and used statistical data to determine whether there were significant changes in the numbers of schools over the decades.² Our analyses are based, firstly, on the arguments made in various sources for the establishment of these schools, as well as their maintenance and

changes to their educational programs. The chosen sources may emphasise different types of arguments that can be interpreted as signs of societal motives. It is important to note that complex phenomena like education may be driven by multiple motives. A second indication that we looked for were signs of contradictions or tensions, which are inevitable when examining human activities. These tensions ignite changes, contributing to the transformation of human activity (Engeström and Sannino 2010). The introduction of new tools, new regulations, or restructuring can contribute to such tensions or contradictions.

Results

The results of our analysis are presented below in four phases: *establishment*, *institutionalisation*, *challenges* and *transformations*. Arguments, contradictions, and tensions are part of our description for each phase. For each phase, we present findings for both Finland and Sweden. While it was relatively simple to create an order for these four phases, it was not as easy to decide the order of events documented within each phase. Development was neither linear nor simultaneous in both countries. Examples included for each phase may therefore refer to different decades; however, our main findings relate to similar developments in the two countries. Furthermore, there may be regional differences in terms of when each phase occurred. We would therefore like to emphasise that the phases we describe here are based on trends related to new societal motives that were detected in the studies, policy texts, and statistics that we analysed.

Establishment: 19th Century

In the late 19th century, the populations of Finland and Sweden were predominantly rural. However, an agricultural revolution was underway and new technologies for improving crops were being developed and disseminated across both countries. While family farms were run by both men and women, tasks were nevertheless gendered. Agricultural education thus targeted both women and men, but it focused on different areas of responsibilities by gender.

Although the concept of VET, in general, became a widely discussed issue during the 19th century, the seed of the idea stemmed from the end of the 18th. An important piece of background information is that Sweden, like other European countries, had various societies which were founded to contribute to the development of a nation-state. In 18th century Sweden, for instance, Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies were founded to advance the scientific development of agriculture (<https://hushallningssallskapet.se/in-english/>). Scientific studies had shown that the economy of the nation was linked to the economies of individual families, and so it was clear that national prosperity was dependent on prosperous families. This was the seed of the idea for such societies in Sweden and beyond (Marjanen 2013). A curiosity from Finland's Russian era is that women's education

was in fact promoted by Tsar Alexander during the late 19th century; his idea was to complement public education (which was not yet compulsory in Finland) with agricultural education for women (Jussila 1968).

The first schools for VET in both countries have focused on agriculture for male students to develop efficient farming techniques. Public education was initially regarded as the correct venue for this kind of education, with agricultural education being seen as complementary, something advocated for by von Knorring (1857). He argued that public schools should continue to provide education for common professions, most importantly, also for women including home economics and textile work. His book exemplifies some of the discussions centred around the Finnish Agricultural Society. It became obvious that men did not run their farms alone: their wives' work contributed substantially to production (Jussila 1968; Marjanen 2013). In relation to contemporary scientific findings and the traditional division of labour between men and women, this argument pointed to the need for women's labour in domains that were considered female: providing food, producing textiles, cleaning the home, and taking care of animals. For instance, nutritional research had emphasised the importance of a varied diet. However, most people had no knowledge of how to grow and use vegetables. It was suggested that vegetables should be a substantial complement to cereals, which was the dominant food for the masses.

In Sweden a similar connection of practical education, as preparation for vocational life, to public education, as von Knorring suggested, had been part of poor relief actions in the cities since the early 19th century. In 1812 poor girls' preparation for domestic work was considered as equally important as poor young boys' preparation for working life. Poor relief schools would provide moral as well as practical education to control poverty as well as the poor people (Sandin 1986; Broberg submitted).

Furthermore, medical findings have emphasised the importance of hygiene standards in daily living as a means of preventing common infectious diseases, decreasing infant mortality, and improving standards of general health. These findings affected how the food was prepared and stored, as well as cleaning practices. One conclusion drawn from all these facts was that changes in women's domestic practices could significantly improve the lives of individual families (Laine 1931; Löfberg 1949; Marjanen 2013). The choice of vocational *home economics* education for women can thus be seen as encompassing more than just cooking, cleaning textiles, and childcare.

These issues raised an important question: how could the necessary knowledge and skills be imparted to women in Finland? The Helsinki Practical School of Home Economics, established in 1878, is the first school mentioned in our sources (Laine 1931; Sysiharju 1995). The final argument we found was that the Women's Union of Finland, established in 1892, emphasised that education for women was also a necessary tool for shared political power (Ollila 1994). These two institutions contributed substantially to the creation of the first teacher-led home economics

education in Finland: the Helsinki Practical School of Home Economics closed in 1891 but was immediately re-established as the Helsinki Educational Cookery School. The school also continued to provide vocational education for girls, with student-teachers leading some classes. It is also worth mentioning that home economics became a school subject for girls attending public schools in cities (Sysiharju 1995).

In the case of Sweden, research is scarce. In articles on the Swedish Folk High School, Lundh Nilsson (2008, 2010) argues that the rise of these types of schools – which were predominantly intended for young adults can be related to a rising societal demand for knowledge that had started in the late 19th century, with phenomena like industrialisation, urbanisation, and new technologies for agrarian labour. These processes contributed to a change in power relations, as new groups began to become engaged in local and national governments; however, this also demanded that they expand their knowledge. Although the main focus of these schools was civic education, Lundh Nilsson (ibid.) found that, between 1868 and 1940, these schools began establishing vocational courses that other institutions later took over. Initially, agrarian subjects were taught at all schools intended for male students, but by 1869, the first courses for women were being introduced. These courses for female students primarily had ‘a strong connection with female domestic duties’ (Lundh Nilsson 2008, 100). Since students were recruited from these new and increasingly influential groups, the institutions also began to include complementary content for women that was related to the idea of *bildung*.

We have found that, in parallel to these vocational courses in folk high schools, schools for home economics were established both in Finland (Lindberg & Salomaa in press) and Sweden (SOU 1945:4). According to Berry (2018), the first schools of this kind in Sweden were founded during the 1860s, this is supported by data from a Statistics Sweden report (SCB 1984). By 1890, they could be found ‘in many places’ (ibid. 58). Berry states that the arguments motivating the establishment of these schools cover a broader period of time, some of which are related to the next phase, below. He argues that scientific knowledge questioned ‘the legitimacy of women’s existing knowledge and practices in cooking and housekeeping’ (www.sprakochfolkminnen.se). According to him vocational education in home economics could be seen as a means for imposing middle- and upper-class values on labourers and small farmers. A large swath of the population in both countries was suffering from malnutrition (the great famine) at the end of the 19th century, most notably in cities (SCB 1984; Lindell 1992). This was not only due to lack of food but to how the food was being handled, stored and prepared. This resulted in the creation of new courses that were offered after graduation from compulsory schooling, differentiated for two groups of female students: a *course in home economics* for those from girls’ schools and a *continuation course* for those who had attended public schools. Similar developments are found in Finland (NN 1925; Marjanen 2013; Sysiharju 1977).

To sum up, this was an era of political, social, economic and agricultural/technological development that had started to alter peoples living conditions. Still, most of the people lived in the countryside. Contrary to many other European countries, the level of urbanisation was low in both countries. A societal motive identified in both Finland and Sweden for women's VET was the making of a new kind of society and a person that could improve the lives of the families, a person who would not be a victim of harsh circumstances but could plan for a better future.

In both countries, the introduction of scientific findings related to hygiene and nutrition created tension in relation to traditional habits and values. Education became a means for transforming the society. Research on the origins of general public education in Sweden suggests that the establishment of women's VET may also be traced to the politics of poor relief in the cities during the 19th century. This may suggest the introduction of school-based home economics had a stronger emphasis on social control in the Swedish case than in the Finnish with an emphasis on social support.

Institutionalisation: 1900–1950

Around the turn of the century and up to 1950 the development concerning women's vocational education continued and stabilised when the number of schools increased (SOU 1945:4; SCB 1984; Kanervio 1925). Thus, a new societal motive was added that was more related to the educational system and an extension of the educational level among the population in general (Marklund 1982; Laukia 2013). Finnish schools for home economics had become an institutionalised part of society as well as folk high schools that, like in Sweden, offered courses in domestic work (Lindberg & Salomaa submitted). In Sweden, the government instituted a practical youth school reform in 1918, marking a formal starting point for Swedish vocational education. This reform formally introduced home economics as VET. However, home economics was the only area in the new Swedish VET system that was not necessarily directed at vocational training for salaried labour (Broberg 2014; Lindell 1992). While some courses targeted domestic workforces, such as maids, others aimed at qualifying women's private housekeeping skills (SOU 1945:4). This can be interpreted as a sign of tensions between emerging societal motives related to the societal differentiation of a new kind. A clue to the tensions is in the names used for women's VET.

The contemporary words used to signify a differentiated female vocational field were *hushållskola* and *husmodersskola*. A direct translation is not possible, and so we will endeavour to provide a short description and comparison between British and American English variants. In translation, the prefix *hushålls*- means household or housekeeping; whereas *husmoders* – means housewife or, literally, 'house mother'. In an Anglo-Saxon context this is referred to as 'domestic'. For the prefix *hushåll*, this term suffices, but for *husmoder*, the personification of the term is

somewhat diminished: while 'domestic' rather refers to an area, the word *moder* refers to a person and a particular status in a household. The translation of *husmodersskolor* and *hushållsskolor* as domestic education or home economics education cannot fully grasp the symbolic power of the women themselves and the physical home associated with the area of education. Both types of schools were established, in both countries originally for the recruitment of different groups of female students. The two major categories of female students were the urban employee and the girls connected to rural households. The urban group was made up of girls that would work in factories and manage the family household and the girls who would work as maids. The rural group was made up of girls taking employment as farm hand and women managing a farm household.

The political agenda put qualifying for a position through education as an important issue. Education would strengthen house work as a vocation. If girls were employed as maids but lacked skills traditionally passed on from mother to daughter and increasingly viewed out of date due to technological and scientific progress, they would be paid less and would only be assigned limited or unskilled tasks. Such arguments paved the way for political decisions about a differentiation of domestic education for various groups.

There were both private and civic facilitators for these new educational courses. Specific for the Swedish reform was that an apprenticeship school was established that recruited those who already were employed as apprentices (SOU 1924:41), based on the main principle of work-based industry training combined with municipally organised school-based learning for vocational and general subjects. A department for domestic work was established at the Swedish National Board of Education.

To sum up, VET in home economics became diversified during this period, targeting either at work in families or at large-scale food production in institutions, on one hand, and for different groups of women on the other (Korkiakangas 2013; SOU 1945:4). These changes can be found in both countries and related to the societal motive of qualification for a diversified labour market, but also for women's voice in public life (Broady et al. 2000; Hjälmeskog 2000; Laine 1931; Ollila 1994). Tensions were the same in both countries: women should learn to maintain their traditional roles and duties in the home, on one hand, and contribute to the family's livelihood by wage work outside the home. However, the organisational foundations for women's VET were different. In Sweden, schools for home-economics remained an umbrella for various fields of specifications (e.g. cookery, textile work, child care), complemented with further education for management of, for instance, cookery in institutions. In Finland, different schools specialised in one education only: schools for textile work, schools for nursery nurses, and so on became the solution (cf. Heikkilä 2003). Schools for home economics remained specialised in home economics only. A complementary motive in Finland was the importance of establishing a national identity after the declaration of independency in 1917.

Education for women was considered a major strategy for ensuring political influence in the young republic (Ollila 1994).

Challenges: 1960–1980

During this phase, the dominant societal motives for vocational home economics education for women were challenged by newly emerging and complementary motives. Issues of gender equality, social and economic background, and where a person lived began to have a significant impact on educational reforms in both countries. We argue therefore that a de-vocalisation of housekeeping is connected to an equally strong focus on work tasks that earlier were attached to the family and towards a societal differentiation of a new kind, a break away from the family as the place for these tasks.

While vocational education for home economics continued to increase, it also further diversified. School-based vocational education grew in importance as alternatives to the apprenticeship schools were implemented, thus employment was not a requirement for entrance. A recession in previous decades, resulting in significant unemployment for young people who were therefore prohibited from entering an apprentice-based school, strengthened political interest in workshop schools (Lindberg 2003). As a complement to existing schools for home economics, courses in home technology³ were integrated into Swedish workshop schools during the 1960s, while other facilitators offered education of various kinds and durations within this field (SCB 1984).

In Finland, existing school-based vocational education for home economics was complemented with education in vocational schools starting in 1946. Initially, there were two directions: home economics and cookery (Nuotio 2000). While the former was based on similar ideas to those found in home economics schools, the latter was directed at the growing institutional catering sector, which provided services to schools and hospitals and later to industries with public food facilities for their staff.

What had in previous decades been an opportunity for women to develop employment skills within a family now became a chance for women to tap into a growing labour market, including work in health and social care outside the family domain. When a traditional, farming-focused society transformed into an industrialised one, it also meant a change in family structure, and caring, fostering and teaching/learning what was needed to make a living also changed. Family as a social institution changed, and many of these traditional activities became 'out-sourced:' working was done elsewhere, educational institutions took over some tasks previously related to the family and caring increasingly became institutionalised, to name just a few changes (Liljeström 1975; Stenström 1995). As a societal institution of teaching and learning, schools grew in importance, strengthening the societal motive for institutionalised vocational

home economics education (Wärvik and Lindberg 2018) in both countries. This also changed the conditions surrounding women's work.

A 1954 Swedish governmental inquiry on vocational education devoted one whole chapter to women's vocational education (SOU 1954:11). Although the content and arguments in the text mirror the traditional perceptions of specifically female education and education in domestic work as important for society, there are also early signs of turning away from the concept of female vocational education as a recognised and accepted phenomenon. 'Women's education' as a concept is challenged, but not fully abandoned. In 1966, the National Agency of Education officially changed the label *Husmoderskola* to *Hemteknisk skola* (home technology), signalling that 'courses of this kind are not for women only' (SOU 1966:3, 67 authors' translation).

It is possible to identify a turning point during the 1960s in Sweden, when political initiatives were introduced as a means of recruiting women into male-dominated professions (SOU 1966:3). A decade later, there were signs of a corresponding process to enrol men into female-dominated professions (SOU 1972:27). In 1970s Finland, these two initiatives coincided alongside a reformation of upper secondary education (Kuusi, Jakku-Sihvonen, and Koramo 2009; Stenström and Virolainen 2014).

In Sweden, upper secondary education was reformed in 1970. This reform meant that vocational education was now part of every organisationally integrated upper secondary school. Previous venues for vocational education, which incorporated different content, used different names and had a wider range of quality, were partly standardised into 16 educational programmes for a vocational education programme lasting 2 years, complemented with a variety of special courses. Two of the vocational lines were related to former vocational home economics education and to the course in home technology: the consumer line and the food technology line, respectively. While the consumer line was general in scope, including domestic work in non-institutional services, cookery and textile work, the food technology line was more specific in its orientation, preparing people for work in institutional catering or restaurants (Skolöverstyrelsen 1971).

The reformation of Finnish upper secondary education was somewhat similar, although it did not take place until the 1980s, and it sought to standardise educational choices even more. However, vocational education was kept organisationally separate from general upper secondary education. The number of students admitted to vocational education for home economics decreased and the educational programmes were either focused on jobs, such as cleaning or merged with agricultural education under the umbrella of agricultural tourism. Schools for home economics were therefore either closed down or changed their educational direction to catering and/or restaurant services.

To sum up, an emergent societal motive for domestic education identified in the previous period now became established. A sign for this is that domestic education was institutionalised in both countries with an increased amount of

schools and students and diversification of the educational programmes offered. However, growing tension in both countries concerned the variety of length, content and quality of VET in general. Processes of standardisation were initiated in both countries, resulting in reforming of VET in Sweden in 1970 and in Finland during the 1980s. In this process, the societal motive for domestic education lost legitimacy, because of firstly, the political strives for gender equity (see above) and secondly, a new growing labour market for women (Wärvik and Lindberg 2018).

Transformations: 1990s

In the 1990s, all vocational programmes were converted to a three-year duration to match the general programs – a societal motive that continued the trend towards equality. Based on the idea of lifelong learning, there would be no educational dead ends. In the 1980s and 1990s, this became even more evident as both countries implemented equal opportunity policies with a broader scope. Most importantly, these changes allowed young people to continue their higher education, although in different ways in the two countries (Lappalainen, Nylund, and Rosvall 2019; Lasonen and Young 1998). Both Finland and Sweden became more responsive to international influences and trends. One aspect was the critique of an insufficient collaboration with working life, which has had an impact on the formation of vocational programmes from the 1990s onward. The societal motives for *vocational* home economics education vanished. Vocations associated with food had transformed into institutionalised activities, such as industrial food production, catering, and restaurant services. While there is still a need for improved health, hygiene and caring at home, technology has taken on some of this work, while some are now in the realm of extra-family institutions and sectors. Deprived of its vocational status, home economics is still in the curriculum of compulsory education with the purpose of preparing young men and women for an independent living as opposed to the early educations preparing for the responsibility of a family.

Conclusions and Discussion

In both Finland and Sweden, a main societal motive for organising women's education was a process of nation building, addressing issues of poverty and health, on one hand, and women's voice in society on the other. This process also encompassed other societal motives underpinning the emergence, establishment and development of domestic education as vocational education in both countries: (1) vocational education as a means for economic development and societal prosperity, (2) to make the population healthier by educating women in issues relating to science (hygiene, health and nutrition). This fit well into the growing interest in (3) developing educational possibilities for women in particular but also social groups other than the upper classes. This is a strong signal of a societal motive related to developing gender equality.

Domestic education became a concept, thus hiding a numerous amount of VET that taught for vocations that provided for the basic welfare of humans. As domestic education developed courses and programs for production and preparation of food, clothing, housing, caring, etc. it would be fair to assume that women's education also in practice – women carrying out the daily use of this knowledge – contributed to the development of the welfare state in both Finland and Sweden.

The societal motive behind equality in education has in general relied on general subjects, not on vocational ones. However, it should be stressed that early home economics courses designed for women in the 19th and 20th centuries opened the door for many women to participate in public life for the first time, while also offering education to ordinary people in both rural and urban locations. While some gender studies claim that domestic education tied women to their homes even more and thus slowed down the emancipation process (Fredriksson 1987; Ohrlander submitted), this is only partly true. We argue that domestic education as women's VET has played a more complex part in the political history of women. Bearing in mind that domestic education was organised by women for women, we argue that domestic education contributed to women's emancipation. Through organising, executing and providing continued practical education and vocational education, women from the upper and middle classes engaged in work outside the home, while working-class girls and women left home to partake in education and to work in someone else's home or institutions. This clearly shows that, to connect the dots between education and women's participation in public life, we must include all forms of education – not only teacher education or nursing but also the domestic as a vocational field and the expanded institutionalisation and industrialisation within this field.

The driving force for the dismantling of education targeting women, in particular, was a de-emphasis on domestic work for the 20th century. This de-vocalisation was, paradoxically, initiated by a vocalisation, a process where an emphasis on domestic tasks became subject to political, economic, technical and scientific developments. In the end, the occupational and educational differentiation led to the decline of 'domestic' as a vocational area. Today, there remains occupations and vocational education programmes with gendered connotations. As large-scale production led to greater interest in and emphasis on traditionally domestic work tasks, the specialisation and differentiation of that work led in turn to domestic vocations being seen less and less as a cohesive field for vocational knowledge.

Notes

1. The Swedish word, in this case, is *sällskap*, whereas our previous use of the word society (in relation to societal motives) translates as *samhälle*.
2. Statistical comparisons require a further work that needs access to specific municipal archives, currently not available. For a register of types of schools, their establishment and closure in Finland, see Lindberg and Salomaa (forthcoming). However, the number of students are not included in this study. To date, there is no similar comprehensive

description of Swedish schools within this area. Various sources (SCB 1984, SOU 1930:9, SOU 1945:5) give partial information of schools and students.

3. Sw: *hemteknisk kurs*

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