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The role of the teacher being focused on an international conference

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One of America's leading educational researchers, Richard Ingersoll, is currently in Växjö. In the beginning of the week he was on Norregård School.

“The teachers described that the demands on teachers have increased over time but not the salaries,” Richard Ingersoll says.

Richard Ingersoll, professor of education at the University of Pennsylvania and one of the key note speakers at Linnaeus University's international conference focusing on the role of the teacher. He got a good impression of Norregård school on his first visit to Sweden:

“It was clean and tidy, well organized. I saw no graffiti, almost no debris in the hallways, not even in the canteen. The students seemed happy and most of the teachers were women.”

In the US there are about four million teachers, 2012, three quarters of them women, according to Richard Ingersoll. The discussion of how the teaching profession status can be raised is also present in the US. US politicians disagree on teacher salaries, the Democrats want to see higher teacher salaries while some Republicans think that salaries are already too high says Richard Ingersoll. The pay gap is also large in the teaching profession; teacher in resource-rich suburban schools in his hometown Philadelphia earn many times more than teachers in public schools in the inner city. The differences compared to the situation in Swedish are in many ways large, in the US there is no uniform national curriculum, each state has its own curricula.

As keynote speaker at the Conference “Teachers Matter - but how”, Richard Ingersoll will talk about changing roles, and a shift in how teachers work is evaluated. And about how teaching profession has been degraded in times of document and control management.

“In the US school debate there is a movement stressing the importance of holding the teachers accountable. To evaluate their work but also about giving good teachers higher salaries and get rid of the bad ones so we can be as good as Finland in the PISA tests,” Richard Ingersoll says.

The American teacher salaries are tied to the number of years in the profession and the level of education, not to performance, such as lawyers' salaries Richard Ingersoll says. The debate in the US also contains the conception that teachers should get paid according to the progress of their pupils.

“But it's not just the teachers' skill and effort that will determine the progress students make. It's all about motivation, the size of classes, whether the school is messy and if the students slept well the night before a test,” Richard Ingersoll says.

His host during his visit to Sweden, Professor Per Gerrevall, mentions the focus on the first teacher-reform in Sweden as a good start. - The conference will also discuss the increased documentation requirements and the amount of paperwork that reduces teachers' time for teaching. You should not add tasks without removing others. We need a change in Sweden, allowing teachers to have control over their work, and showing trust, which is relying on teachers' professional competence, Per Gerrevall says.

During his stay in Växjö, Professor Ingersoll also wants to visit the cathedral, see red houses with white corners. And find a restaurant serving Swedish schnapps.