

Nordic Studies in Education 40 years. Editor-in-Chief's Speech for the Opening Ceremony at NERA's 48th Congress (2020–03–04)

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Dear organising committee, members of NERA and distinguished guests:

As NERA's journal *Nordic Studies in Education* turns 40 this year, I would like to travel back in time with you and examine the motives and background that led to the foundation of the journal and how it has evolved to this day.

Motives and Background

From NERA's first conference in Jyväskylä in 1973, it would take seven years before NERA had its own journal. According to Karl-Georg Ahlström (2013), we can trace the roots of the journal as early as 1953. In this year, prominent educationists, mostly professors from Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland, met for a joint meeting. At the meeting, they agreed to establish a journal that would focus on educational research in the Nordic countries. The journal was entitled *Pedagogisk Forskning*, and the first issue was published in 1956, with articles written in the Scandinavian languages. Professor Johannes Sandven from Norway was the editor-in-chief and the editorial board consisted of two representatives from each of the Nordic countries, with the exception of Iceland. From 1968 and onwards, the journal was entitled *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, published only in English.

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I mention this journal because Ahlström and others worked to connect this journal with what would become the Nordic Educational Research Association (NERA) in 1973. The idea was that *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* would be NERA's own journal. But this was never the case; hence there was a need to establish a new journal, i.e., a Nordic journal organized by NERA.

According to the former editor of *Nordic Studies in Education*, Biörn Hasselgren (2013, pp. 9-10), there were three factors in particular which raised the need for a new Nordic journal. Firstly, the *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* was controlled by a self-selected group, making external insight and influence impossible (cf. Ahlström, 1973, p. 6). This problem could be solved by connecting a journal with an organization. Secondly, the *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* had a psychological perspective on education; however, the spokesmen for a new journal viewed education from a more society-oriented perspective. Thirdly, the *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* published in English only. For those who wanted a new Nordic journal, there was a desire to write and publish in the Scandinavian languages, in addition to English. These were, according to Hasselgren (ibid.), three important criteria for what would become NERA's own journal in 1980.

Journal Titles

At this time, in 1980, the journal was entitled *Tidskrift för Nordisk Förening för Pedagogisk Forskning*. The title was Swedish, most likely because the editor was Swedish. Moreover, NERA was a Swedish initiative. After six years, from 1986 and onwards, the title of the journal changed to *Nordisk pedagogik*. The title was still Swedish, even though the journal had a Danish editor during this period. The transition to today's English title has happened gradually. In the period 1994–2000 the journal had the subtitle *Journal of Nordic Educational Research* and in the period 2001–2009 the subtitle was *Nordic Educational Research*. Finally, in 2010, the journal was entitled *Nordic Studies in Education*. That, as you know, is still the title of NERA's journal.

Transitions

From the very beginning in 1980, the target group for *Nordic Studies in Education* was primarily members of NERA. It was far from an international periodical consisting of scientific and peer-reviewed articles, which is the hallmark of today's journal. There were several transitions leading up to this particular hallmark. I will point out three of those transitions.

One major transition occurred after Denmark was offered editorial responsibility for *Nordic Studies in Education*. This transition is characterized, first and foremost, by changing the target group of the journal. The goal was to reach out to the research community and to scholars who had a scientific interest in education. *Nordic Studies in Education* was no longer a periodical for NERA members only.

A second transition took place in 1988, when Scandinavian University Press (Universitetsforlaget) assumed responsibility for the publication and distribution of *Nordic Studies in Education*. This transition meant, among other things, that the number of pages was expanded, up to 320 pages per year, with four quarterly issues.

A third transition consisted of formalizing the review process, a process that would eventually lead to a double blind review. Previously, the editorial board of *Nordic Studies in Education* had to entice and persuade writers to publish in the journal, which probably had a negative effect on the quality of the articles. This is certainly not the case today. Currently, the journal receives a large number of manuscripts, up to 100 submissions per year.

Overall, the previous editors and boards of the journal have contributed greatly to today's *Nordic Studies in Education*. However, this is not the end of the story. Quite recently a fourth transition has occurred.

Gold Open Access

The background for this major transition goes back to 2015, when the board and I as editor set ourselves the goal of increasing the journal's impact, availability and visibility. Successively, and due to certain restrictions as President John Krejsler underlined in his speech, our goal has been to be a gold open access journal, so that articles can be immediately and freely available to the wider public. In order to achieve such a major transition, we negotiated with Scandinavian University Press. It is no secret that we have been in contact with other publishers as well, including the international publishing company SAGE. However, after endless meetings, both physical and digital, we came to the conclusion that neither Scandinavian University Press nor SAGE could offer what we wanted.

Thus, we entered into negotiations with Norway's largest publishing house – Cappelen Damm. This was also a lengthy and demanding process; however, we achieved our goal in the end. As of January 1st this year, all articles in *Nordic Studies in Education* are gold Open Access, published in print. This means that all new articles published in NERA's journal are freely available to all readers. What is also new is that Cappelen Damm Akademisk, the journal's new publisher, provides an online submission and peer review tool for the journal, to enable a transparent and more effective peer review process.

Keeping the tradition alive

Despite this major transition, keeping the tradition alive is important to us. The journal's tradition of writing in either a Scandinavian language or English has been preserved. As a Nordic journal, *Nordic Studies in Education* highlights the Nordic dimension of education and educational research. The journal will continue to emerge quarterly, publishing peer-reviewed articles, debates and shorter pieces, and information.

Special issues will amount to at the most a quarter of the issues. We will also continue with the Ahlström Award, which was initiated in 1994.

Finally, the editorial board and Cappelen Damm Akademisk are very happy to announce that the first open issue of *Nordic Studies in Education* has now been published online. We invite all of you to take a look at our new website and the latest articles (<https://noredstudies.org>).

Thank you!

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