

Transcript of ENHANCE Podcast Episode: Voices from Färnebo and Enhance workshops in Gävle

Recorded by: Farnebo

Interviewer: Hello and welcome to the Enhancepod. In this episode you will meet Kevin, Stina, Liam and Maria, all students in a general course at Färnebo Folkhögskola in Gävle. Stina, Liam and Maria present proposals that they believe would improve society. But first Kevin will tell you a little about his experiences in a general course and a workshop he participated in at the beginning of the year.

You will have to tell us a little about this one. You attended a workshop on January 26. Can you say something about that workshop? What was it about?

Kevin: We gathered from two schools, some representatives and teachers from both schools. At that time it was Brunsvik and Färnebo and we had representatives from different parties. We talked about the impact of folk high schools in society and what folk high schools do.

Interviewer: What did you come to?

Kevin: We came to the conclusion that folk high schools do a lot. They contribute to a better democracy, better general education for older people and give a chance to those for whom school has not worked.

Interviewer: How do you think this meeting between course participants and politicians went? How did it feel?

Kevin: Well, it was quite fun. I sat next to a municipal councilor from the Social Democrats and he seems, he's a politician but he seems okay.

Interviewer: Since not everyone knows about general education, I asked Kevin to describe what it's like for him to study in a general education course.

Kevin: So for the most part there's a lot of group work in the theme lessons and stuff like that and Swedish, and then it's more individual in math even though you can talk to others. It feels easier to study here because you have so many resources for contacts here.

Interviewer: You're talking about the relationships you have, that kind of make it easy if I understand you. How would you say, how much do you get to be involved if you compare it to your previous study experiences? What significance do you think it has that you get to be involved in shaping the studies here?

Kevin: No, but it matters a lot. It feels like you have control over what happens at school and what we work on, how we work.

Interviewer: How does it work? How are you and your fellow students involved in shaping your studies? Can you give some examples?



Kevin: Yes, first of all it's through mentoring. There you can choose which subjects to study, which days within the framework of the school. And then we have evaluations that are very important and they change... no semester is the same. And that's because the evaluations are there.

Interviewer: Interesting that you say that. You feel that the evaluations are important because there you get to raise your points of view and then changes are made together with you. Can you give some examples of something that has changed?

Kevin: The biggest one is in Swedish. We get more, or they have been given time to write scientific papers and that has reduced stress a lot for those who do it now. I remember that it was very stressful for me because I started late too.

Interviewer: What did you write your paper about?

Kevin: Uh, stratospheric aerosol injection.

Interviewer: And that means?

Kevin: It means blocking the sun's rays through particles diluted in the air. It's a way to try to deal with global warming.

Interviewer: Interesting what you say. You mention this about evaluations, that it was a way that your views have been captured and that it has led to changes. How can you be involved in shaping your studies more day to day, so to speak?

Kevin: So day to day, it is by talking to the teachers and we can do that at any time in principle. We can get in touch or we just meet in the corridor or we have some other conversation.

Interviewer: The workshop in January that Kevin participated in was the first of two workshops that were carried out in the spring of 2026 as part of the ENHANCE project. In April, a larger workshop was arranged where the entire general course at both Färnebo folk high school and Brunsvik folk high school participated. The focus of this second workshop was both on what is good in today's Gävle and things that the participants want to change in society. One of the participants was Stina. So I'll ask you Stina, which proposal did you think of?

Stina: Of the ones we wrote down, it was healthcare that I focused on the most.

Interviewer: And what kind of change would you like to see there?

Stina: Shorter healthcare queues. I think many people agree with that.

Interviewer: How come you're thinking about that then?

Stina: Well, I have two children. And we've sought healthcare many times and there are long queues and it takes time before you get help.



Interviewer: How old are your children?

Stina: Two and five years.

Interviewer: Then you have had time to go to the health service more than once. How do you feel about it, has there been long queues for care during all the time you have been a parent?

Stina: I think it has been about the same during that period.

Interviewer: What do you think is the reason why there are queues like this?

Stina: Yes, there is a shortage of nurses and doctors and a high workload.

Interviewer: How do you think we will solve this then? Do you have any suggestions. Is more money needed?

Stina: Yes, that is right, it is that people should be able to train as doctors and nurses and it should perhaps be a little easier to apply for those courses.

Interviewer: So we need to invest in education, adult education to get more people.

Stina: But I think that is good. And of course more resources are always needed for the hospitals and health centers.

Interviewer: We would then need to direct this to the region then. But the thing about resources, all of us who have jobs pay taxes. Do we have to pay more taxes, is that what you are suggesting?

Stina: No, we already pay a lot of taxes so that...

Interviewer: But how are we going to get more resources in healthcare?

Stina: Yes, that is a good question. We will have to think about it more.

Interviewer: Another person who participated in the larger workshop in April was Liam.

Hi Liam. You live in Gävle, did you move in or grow up here?

Liam: I grew up a little outside in Älvkarleby and moved to the city three or four years ago.

Interviewer: If you live in Älvkarleby, is Gävle the nearest larger city?

Liam: Yes, it is

Interviewer: Yes, but you have things that you like and things that you don't like about Gävle, but you have had to think about suggestions that are good either for Gävle or for society at large. Which suggestion do you think is good?

Liam: Yes, try to reduce gang crime.

Interviewer: That feels important.



How do you think we do that?

Liam: By having better resources for young people such as leisure centres and social venues so that they don't have to get involved in those networks.

Interviewer: But aren't there already quite a few leisure centres in Gävle?

Liam: Yes, but there are also many that have been closed and those who have started going there have nowhere to go.

Interviewer: Do you also think that those that exist should get more resources:

Liam: There should be more focus on trying to get people there at an early age.

Interviewer: You think they're missing out, that the leisure centres that do exist don't reach out?

Liam: There would need to be more activities for young people in general so that there's just a stronger sense of cohesion for the younger ones.

Interviewer: Do you think that when that's missing, then there's a risk that you'll get drawn into a gang?

Liam: Yes. Humans are social creatures, so everyone seeks togetherness. If they don't get it in one place, they will look for it somewhere else.

Liam: It's usually the younger ones who are exposed to committing the act or are drawn into it.

Interviewer: How have you experienced this gang crime yourself? In this area?

Liam: Yes, a little. Well, it's only a few hundred meters outside where I live at Stenebergsparken, someone was shot a month ago. The same down on Söder, people have been shot outside the pub. And in Uppsala, there was a boy who had tried to shoot someone who lived in the neighborhood where I grew up too.

Interviewer: Then it comes close. Very, very sad and very acute to do something

Interviewer: If the municipality is going to invest, where can the municipality get the resources?

Liam: First of all, you can cut back on all the unnecessary investment they put into extremely unnecessary art. Some municipalities buy some ugly statue for several million that no one thinks looks good at all. There is money to be saved there. And then some municipalities have bought a large coffee table for several hundred thousand that they are going to put in the municipal building. There they can also save a lot of money, just get a regular IKEA table instead.

Interviewer: Finally, we will also listen to Maria who also shares some thoughts about changes in society that she would like to see.



Hi Maria. What proposal do you want to promote?

Maria: Well, I have noticed that here in Gävle there are a lot of homeless people. Even though I come from a big city, Stockholm, but it feels more widespread up here. I know that Gävle has a project called “Housing first”, but it seems to be based more on opinion and perhaps a little prejudice about what you have to do to be able to live there, instead of more on facts and knowledge from other parts of the world than Sweden

Interviewer: Tell me again what the project was called?

Maria: It is called “Housing first”. A project for the homeless. They use something called a staircase model. That you have to gradually work your way up, that in order to be responsible for having an apartment, you have to be able to be drug-free. And it is very complicated because you need a safe environment to be able to stop that kind of addiction. It cannot be done on the street. They should do it more based on factual knowledge than prejudice. It is a big cost to society with police and healthcare and more, in addition to the human suffering that is completely unnecessary in a welfare state like Sweden. It says a lot about us if we are unable to take care of those who need it most.

Interviewer: We are talking about homeless people. But are they often people who are mentally ill?

Maria: Yes, it is often a combination of that and other things. But then the social safety net in Sweden has been dismantled and people fall, you may lose your job and cannot pay, it is easier to end up on that side than you think

Interviewer: So your suggestion is to work on this, but make it more inclusive, don't have unreasonable demands.

Maria: You can look at countries like Portugal or Switzerland and their way of combating drug abuse. Instead of forcing people out into the streets, or stealing to fund their addiction, the state offers a safe environment and clean drugs, and it turns out that people who end up in such an environment don't stay in it for long. They leave the system and get clean instead.

Interviewer: What you're saying is that if we can provide a good environment for these people, then they won't be a problem for society?

Maria: No, it turns out in several countries. We have a very strict morality in Sweden on this issue, there's right and wrong, bad people and good people. We have to let go of that view of people.

Interviewer: You've just listened to an episode of the Enhancepod. If you want to listen to more episodes, you can find information about the podcast on the Färnebo Folkhögskola website. There you can also read more about the project and good examples of democratic popular education from different parts of Europe. Thank you for listening.

