

## **Choosing The Films For Small Feet Go Far And Sweden's Approach To Film in Education**

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The quality of Swedish children's films can be linked to the strong tradition of literature for children and young people in Sweden. Many writers and illustrators with a literary background regularly work within the film industry, as scriptwriters or animators.

The Swedish Film Institute, founded in 1963, supports the production and distribution of films in Sweden. Since 1993 one film commissioner, appointed for three years at the time, supports the production of films for children and young people. The children's film commissioner plays an important role in challenging producers, scriptwriters and others to work in the field of children's films, asking for stories and perspectives beyond those most expected. Over the years, the children's film commissioner has high-lighted the need for films with girls in leading roles, films mirroring Sweden's multi-cultural society and the need for good quality feature films for a younger audience, aged seven to nine years old.

In the 1990s, 19 regional centres for film production and media education were established throughout Sweden. Three of those centres have been very actively involved in the production of feature films and have created opportunities for a new generation of filmmakers to get into the film business.

The centres have also played a vital role, financing films which have broadened the horizon of what it is like to grow up in different provinces of Sweden. The film that has become the symbol for this new trend in Swedish film production is *Fucking Åmål* from 1998, also known as *Show Me Love*, a coming-of-age drama about two teenage girls falling in love, set in a small town.

The films selected for Small Feet Go Far are aimed at children and young people, but should not be regarded only as children's films. In Sweden they are appreciated by a general audience as well. The films deal with relations between children and adults, without being patronising or puerile. After the first run at the box office, the films have been used frequently in school cinema programmes and have stimulated pupils and teachers to discover and discuss the issues they raise.

The film education programme in Sweden, launched during the 1980s, has grown into a big movement comprising pupils, teachers and school administrators. Local and independent film education working groups are active today in more than 150 of Sweden's 290 municipalities. They are in charge of the local school cinema co-operation programmes and they support and develop the possibilities for pupils and students to produce their own films in video workshops.

The approach has been that film and media literacy is a responsibility for all teachers and should be included in all aspects of teaching. No matter what issue or subject you are teaching in school, you have to reflect upon media representation and give the pupils the tools to create and communicate with moving image media. The syllabuses for the compulsory schools (pupils 6-15 years old) stress the use of film in education as a source of knowledge, as a creative tool for pupils, and as a form of art.

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